

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEMBERS PRESENT

February 18, 2023
OTHERS PRESENT

John Dickerson, Chairman
Tim Yarbrough, Vice Chairman
Finch Holt
Jeremiah Jefferies
Rick McVey
Frank Rose

Bryan Miller, County Manager
Melissa Williamson, Deputy County Manager
Jennifer Hammock, Finance Director
Melissa Miller, Deputy Finance Director
Carla Smith, Clerk to the Board

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Caswell, North Carolina, met in a work session on Saturday, February 18, 2023 at 9:00 am at the Gunn Memorial Library.

WELCOME:

Chairman Dickerson called the meeting to order. 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.

AGENDA:

RETREAT OVERVIEW:

County Manager Miller said Commissioners, this morning we have with us Mr. Neil Emory, who is an employee of the NCACC and Amy Cannon, also an employee of the NCACC. Neil and Amy are both retired Managers, and they help Boards facilitate retreats among other things. They help managers across the state do a number of different things. They are here today to facilitate our retreat. So at this time I will turn it over to Neil Emory.

Mr. Emory said thank you for the opportunity and I feel like I'm coming home. I was Manager here back from 1982-1988. I was county Manager with Gordon Satterfield, Bill Pointer, Sam Hamlett, and Wilson Watlington. That was my first Manager job and I was 24 years old. I still have a lot of great friends here.

As far as a retreat overview, our objective is to help lead your discussion. There is an agenda, and Bryan Miller will talk about the review of the year you just had. I know this Board is going through a lot of change with new members and the passing of a member. Moving forward, I think this is a great step to address that. It's a good time to come together as a Board and get a sense of where we want to go as a county and that we want to go together as a team. That's what we want to do is help facilitate that. Bryan will give the year in review, and then I will introduce Amy. Amy just started with us a few weeks ago. We are very fortunate that she joined our outreach team. She was a County Manager in Cumberland County. She has a strong background in finance. Amy will talk about where we are as an association already assisting you with some financial issues. How the association plays a role there, and we are here to help you. We are

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going to talk about board relations some. Board relations is about people. Working together as a team is very important. We will go over keys to that which make for a good board. You aren't going to agree on everything. We are a democracy and you are supposed to disagree on somethings. There are ways you can agree to disagree and still work together as a group. Then comes the Board's priorities. We have listed some topics to help give some direction as to how you want to go moving forward. Please feel free bring up topics as we go through these items. Finally, at the end of the day, we will talk about where we go from here. We don't want this meeting to just be a meeting. We don't want to leave and not do anything about what we have talked about. We need to address where do we go, who is responsible, and who's going to let us know where we stand. Today always feel free to jump in, and let us know if we are getting off tract. This is your meeting.

YEAR IN REVIEW:

County Manager Miller said Commissioners over the last year, you've been busy. We brought some things to a resolution that needed to be brought to a resolution. We have also had some things that basically just broke our hearts. We had an officer involved shooting in Caswell County, and that is something I never imagined we would see. We have had passings of two beloved commissioners. We've had some good things to happen too. Hopefully we have turned the corner on COVID, and I think the staff and Board of Commissioners did an excellent job dealing with the pandemic. We are closing out the High School construction project. The construction for the project is complete, and now we have a beautiful reconstructed high school. We've also went through the High School funding. It's the first time the county has ever handled that side of the financing or construction project like the high school. Every other time a school was constructed, the Board of Commissioners gave the money to the Board of Education, and the Board of Education handled it. This time was different. We had an interim loan and the USDA financing. That process is complete from the Board's standpoint. We also dealt with CARES Act money, the Watershed Review appeals, residential and industrial growth in the southern part of the county, an Economic Development Action Plan, a Payroll Classification study, and Broadband. We closed out the Shadow Ridge Road improvements. We're beginning a revaluation, and we dealt with drug forfeiture funds and a High Intensity Development property analysis. We dealt with Project CEAD (Center for Educational and Agricultural Development). We have implemented VIPER tower enhancements for Emergency Services communication. WE dealt with DSS staffing shortages, comprehensive plan revisions, American Rescue Plan funding. As I mentioned before the issuance of USDA bonds. We heard about school performance growth, late audits, and plans for advancements for those audits. We have had the election of three new Board members, legislative goals, food insecurity in Milton, economic development at the Pelham Industrial Park. Now we are dealing with Emergency Services employee shortages. We were successful in the reallocation of funds for the Highway 86 project. Commissioners you've been busy and staff has made contributions of time and resources for these projects. These are just some of the highlights that Caswell has faced.

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Now one of the things I spoke about was late audits, plans for advancement, and completion of those audits. So I will ask Amy to talk a little about the meeting we had this week.

Amy Cannon retired in December after a 32-year career in Local Government. She grew up in budget and that gave her a good foundation to move to Finance Director, which she did for many years. Then she became Assistant Manager and finally retired after 8 years as County Manager. Your job is not easy, and I have a lot of empathy and respect for you and what lies ahead. We are hoping we can be helpful today.

The NCACC has worked with the State Treasurer and the State Auditor in putting resources on the ground to assist counties. We have created a new section for member services. They have actually added staff, and I'm one of those staff members and also Johna Sharpe, who has a tremendous amount of financial and budget experience. We spent some time with your staff two weeks ago, and came up with a plan. Yesterday, I want to report to you, that we met with the Isley group in Raleigh, NC. The Isley Group is working on restructuring and creating a clean trial balance to be turned over to your auditors. Johna and I are going to be a resource for your Finance office. Yesterday we spent about three hours developing a very solid plan. Johna will be the resource with Isley and make sure timeframes are met and we get them the information that they need in a timely manner. We have a solid plan to get that 2021 audit completed and have the county be successful. Immediately after that get the 2022 audit finished. Just to give you a little bit of confidence, another neighboring county was two audits behind, and within a period of time, Johna Sharpe has worked with them. They have very successfully completed those two audits.

Neil Emory said I will just add that one of the things that has come out of this ARPA money is a pledge from the association to help counties in this regard. You have probably heard the term the UAL, Unit Assistance List. You are not alone on it. There are 12 counties, and our commitment is to get all 12 counties off of it. Johna is the Deputy Manager in Wake County and longtime finance person there. If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know. We want to be there to help.

BOARD RELATIONS:

With three new members and a fourth member coming on board, it is a good time to talk about board relations and working together. One new members can change a board. Here in Caswell it could change the Board's dynamics. The Board has to work together as a team and respect each other as team members. The biggest mistake I've seen is having new members come on the board and think they are going to change the world. It takes a majority from the Board's respect to make a change. Each of you were elected by a group of constituents to represent their interest. In business you can make a decision and move fast. This is the public's business. It's not your dollars; it's their dollars. So it does take time. New member don't get frustrated when things take a while to move. That's the way it is designed to take time. It takes due diligence to get the information from everybody because you are spending the taxpayers' money.

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I can't stress enough the importance for good government is about team work in implementation and operation. There are a few key things I would point out to you individually and as a group. The Board sets the policy and through the chain of command must implement that policy.

- Get to know your fellow Board members. I hope everyone here has their fellow Board members' mobile numbers so you can talk to them. Sometimes learning where your fellow Board member is coming from is key to knowing what makes them tick. What is important to them and why is that important to them. This can help you understand how a member feels about an issue.
- Call your fellow board members to get clarity on issues that you may not understand. I encourage communication.
- Every issue stands alone. You deal with some tough issues and things that can lead to hurt feelings and emotions, and that's where this communication goes a long way. Don't let one issue impact another.
- Know what each other's priorities are.
- Respect staff and their profession. They work for you. This is the livelihood of your staff and decisions will impact their families and all that are involved. If you have problems with staff, try to communicate that the proper way through your manager but refrain from using the public forum.
- One county commissioner has no authority whatsoever in the state of North Carolina, but a majority of commissioners has quite a bit of authority.
- Know that you are going to disagree. That's democracy.
- Every county has a reputation and it can carry over to economic development, recruiting employees, dealing with state officials, and other areas. You want to have a reputation that you have stability and professional conduct of the Board.
- Policy development is the Board's direction and helps to set the tone for the county.
- If you have a new idea and bring it to a meeting and people start questioning you, don't think people's question are opposition. They are just learning where you come from. Stay positive and be persistent. It takes time.
- Don't burn any bridges with your fellow commissioners.
- There is a standard you should have for staff because they work for you.
- Try to live by the mantra: I won't surprise you, if you don't surprise me. For example, don't introduce new items at a board meeting that you have not talked with other board members about. Communicate with each other. The board meeting is not the place to introduce a new item. If you hear information, share it with all your board members.
- Do your homework. Call and ask staff before getting to the meeting and read your background information.
- There will be policies that the board adopt that you may not support, but come together as a team and move forward.

Caswell has had a change in Chairman, and you need to know how you want to utilize your chairman. The chairman's role is a lot to try to share amongst board members. The chairman

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runs the meetings, but they can also play a role in helping to resolve issues between board members and staff. The agenda process is also a role that the chairman is involved in.

You are not a commissioner full time so you have to rely on staff. You do have a CEO, the County Manager. Used for an example a professional football team. The Commissioners are like the owner of the team. The County Manager is the coach down on the field with the team. The manager must run the day to day activities, but don't get in the game. Communicate with the manager and give them time to address it. If they don't that is an issue with the manager not the department. That runs the risk of alienating. Retention of employees is a dilemma right now. One of the quickest ways to run off employees is to make employees feel like they work in an environment where they don't know who they work for.

Be mindful of constituent services. Be responsive to citizens. Let the manager know of problems first. Give the County Manager a 48-hour window to work on the issue. Follow the chain of command. A county commissioner can't see a personnel file, because that is a county manager role. Stay out of personnel because of the liability if people's interest and privacy are not protected. Follow the right process and chain of command. Staff will appreciate that.

Some of the difficult issues that you will face as a Board, they are much easier to deal with if you have that personal relationship and trust with each other. Respect each other's stand on issues.

Commissioner Jefferies: I don't have a disagreement, but I want to make myself very clear. I love every board member on this board. I think we had a policy once that we did not bring new items to the Board and vote on them that same day.

County Manager Miller said there is a policy that the Board will not vote on off budget appropriations of more than \$10,000 in the same meeting that it is presented. I am not sure if it is a policy, but it may have just been an agreement that you would talk about a topic before you took a vote on it. In a retreat like this we spoke about this.

Commissioner Jefferies said three people came up and changes the day meetings to night meetings. I think we should have had some kind of input on this too. It looks like you all had already had the meeting before you came to the meeting to change it. You have elderly people out here and everyone knew this before they ran for this position. They knew how it had been. I have been around here for 30 years, and this come up. The next thing I had was we had a member from the democratic party recommended. We had 2 democrats come on. Massengill came on with nothing said. It was done the exact same way, but when this black man was recommended there was a problem. I don't have a good feeling about this. We need to work together. Together we can move, but divided we won't do nothing.

Neil Emory said a lot of Board's have a rule that if you add an agenda item, another member can veto that item. This is something to keep in mind. It protects the public because they may have wanted to be a part of that item. When do you all approve the rules of procedure. County

Manager Miller said we just approved them in December of 2022. Mr. Emery said you can change those rules at any time.

Commissioner Yarbrough: I think as far as board relations go, there can be a difference of opinions. I made the statement before a meeting in December I'd like to get along with everyone on this board, and work for the good of the citizens of Caswell County. We are not going to all agree on everything, but I believe there is a lot of outside influence so to speak on decisions that this Board may or may not make on social media. Sometimes good and sometimes not so good. Everybody is entitled to their own opinions. Sometimes statements are made to be factual that may or may not have happened in a board meeting. The public sees that and comes to ask us why things happened. As a Board we need to be able to communicate those. We don't have to get down in the dirt on issues. If I'm in favor of something I will tell you why I am in favor of it in a meeting. If I'm opposed to something, I will do likewise. I will tell you why I'm opposed to it. I'm open to hear your opinion, but my opinion is my own. My constituents did not elect me to go along to get along. I was elected to represent my constituents. I am not here to just be a member and go along with the status quo. I love these guys, but like the song says I may not like you all the time, but I love you.

Neil Emery said that's a good point of having that respect on the Board. You are going to have different opinions and different perspectives. You are elected to review all the facts and make the decision based on the facts and your constituents interest. Don't run the risk of listening to those few loud voices that are trying to dictate what the public wants. Always give the facts to the public. You are in the best place to know what your constituents want or need.

Chairman Dickerson: Mr. Jefferies, we been on this board together for a while and I listen to you throw out accusations of racism for rejecting the candidate the democratic party brought up. Nothing could be further from the truth. My evaluation of the candidate, I don't care if it was a republican or democratic party, is if either party brought a candidate to fill a seat, the candidate need not change their affiliation two days after the party nominates them. Democratic party nominated Mr. Foster, and two days later he changed his party affiliation from independent to democrat. That is more than enough for me to vote no on him. It had nothing to do with the color of his skin, but everything to do with not being a member of that party when he was selected. That is why I opposed him.

Neil Emery said that is a tough conversation, but you have to say where you are coming from. You walk away from here and you are still both county commissioners working at the best interest of the county.

Commissioner Holt: I can say there has never been anything ever discussed but that it was going to be a black democrat in the very first conversation that were ever had. Antonia Foster is in my district, District 2. How is he representing Nate Hall's district, District 4?

Commissioner Jefferies: My point was that I said in that meeting that we had another person in that district that could fill that position, but you did not stop and hear me. You heard me, but you continued on.

Chairman Dickerson said I spoke with you after the meeting and asked you who that other candidate was. Can you bring them here? Commissioner Jefferies said we talking in the elevator, but that was too late. The meeting was over then. I called the Democratic chair, and she said they had two people file, Foster and Gwynn. Both were qualified. I would have made a motion to put Gwynn in, but you kept going. Commissioner Holt said the Chairman asked the County Manager to see if the Democratic party would give another recommendation. Chairman Dickerson said she was not there that night, and Commissioner Jefferies said no. Chairman Dickerson said that is why I asked the Democratic Party to bring another candidate.

County Manager Miller said Commissioners, what I will tell you is that I contacted the head of the Democratic Party, and requested that they make another recommendation to the Board. I expect that will occur in the coming weeks.

Neil Emory said this is a tough decision for counties across the state. You're not alone in that it can be an emotional time. You are going through the passing of one commissioner and selecting a new one. The Party recommends a person, but the Board decides. Commissioner Yarbrough said the party brings a recommendation, but the county makes the final decision. Mr. Emery said if you don't agree on a candidate, then the Clerk of Court appoints. Commissioner Yarbrough said we don't want to get to that point. This is a perfect point about knowing you are going to disagree, but you still have to do what you feel is best.

Commissioner Jefferies said I love you guys, but I don't want nothing coming under the table and you all having meetings before the meeting. I want things to come out in the meeting first.

Commissioner Yarbrough said Mr. Jefferies I'm going to be honest. Before the December meeting, I spoke to Bryan about changing the meeting times, and he said we could discuss this during the time we would approve the meeting schedule. That's the reason I brought up about changing the meetings. I have talked to Commissioner Rose, but no one else had I discussed this with. Commissioner Jefferies said I don't want you to think I'm against anything you doing, but this thing under the table I'm not into. Commissioner Yarbrough said I don't know what you are talking about under the table. Frank Rose and I talked about changing the meetings to night because he, I, and the Chairman still have full time jobs. It's hard for us to get here in the morning. That was the only reason I brought it up. There was no hidden agenda. Frank Rose and I talked and then I talked to Bryan and he said we could talk about it when we set the schedule. That was the end of the discussion until that meeting.

County Manager Miller said Commissioners in the past, and Commissioners Jefferies had been very adamant about having the first meeting of the month where you discussed several different items and at the second meeting of the month, you actually took action on those items, if after the discussion you wanted to moving forward. Maybe that is a better course of action, and we can

discuss that later. You take action on items that were discussed at the first meeting so that there is a full understanding about it.

Neil Emory said I don't think anybody set out to do anything, it was just a topic to talk about. The perception of a Board member was that it was slipped in, but this points out the need to communicate. Commissioner Rose said it makes the meeting times work for those working, and the constituents who work. Mr. Emory said there will be some people that can't come either way, but that's the Board's decision.

DETERMINING BOARD PRIORITIES:

Where does the Board want to go or where do you see yourselves in moving forward in the following areas?

- **PUBLIC EDUCATION/HIGHER EDUCATION**

This is a big part of your budget. You just experienced the new High School, and this will be with you for a while. What are issues related with Education and what is the state of things there?

- Commissioner Holt said he was a little at a lost. He was happy with the education his boys received, but he has not paid attention since then. Where are we at with the school system? How are we ranking? What is our rating in comparison to the other counties?
- County Manager Miller said at our last meeting with the School Board, Dr. Carter talked about grades and the report cards. Honestly the report cards were not great. What Dr. Carter highlighted was their growth rates. I'm not talking about growth in attendance but growth in academic achievement from year to year.
- Neil Emory said there is a snapshot on DPI (Department of Public Instruction) website of the grading for each school but you have to dig a bit further on that to see how the students are doing at the schools. Commissioner McVey said it is very misleading.
- ADM: Average Daily Membership or attendance is dropping. 85 out of the 100 counties in North Carolina has a decreasing ADM. This is because the baby boomers are not having children any more, the baby boomers are gone, and families having fewer children. This is a concern because the Board of Education comes to the Board of Commissioners for capital needs. Lower ADM means fewer students in classes and this affects the pay for teachers. How does this impact your school needs? May need additional funding for capital needs from the Commissioners.
- Chairman Dickerson asked Neil Emory if funding is done by different formulas in other locations across the state? For example, based on their performance they get a certain amount of funding from the county. Could population or enrollment be used to determine what is given to the schools? There are two accounts: the yearly appropriations and the some used a formula varies county to county. The formula may include ADM, capital needs, or debt services, but I am not aware of any that do it on performance. The only twist is that you may lose funding from the state if the county

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does not give them the same amount as the year before. The state deems the county's effort and will decrease their contribution based on that. The County and the School system need to be checking other funding sources to see how it impacts them, such as low wealth funding.

- School Consolidation: Commissioner McVey said there is a school in the county that has 138 students in it, and they are short on teachers. It is costing the district about a million dollars to run the school. If we close that school and moving the students to two other schools that are costing two million to run, are we not saving money? There are some renovations needed at the school, so they need to consider closing the school. This would mean longer rides for some of the students in the county, but it shouldn't increase the cost at the other two facilities to match the expense of running this school. It seems it would be absorbed in the expense of running the other schools already. Board needs to look at those cost and relay the concern to the Board of Education. This is a capital expense. This is an issue the two Boards may need to address. County Manager Miller said during the 2020 census, all rural areas saw a decline in population while urban areas saw an increase in population. School enrollment is declining because of charter schools, private schools, average number of children in a home has decreased to 2 or 1.5, and home schools because parents are working from home. Parents would have trouble dropping kids off before heading to work in Burlington and Greensboro. Maintaining facilities, what can we afford?
- The renovated High School is debt for 30 years. This is a commitment that has to be placed in your budget to pay that debt.
- How much fund balance does the schools have? The school system does not need a huge fund balance because they have the county to turn to. McVey said the schools need to have enough fund balance to cover 3-6 months of operating costs.
- Commissioner Rose said another concern is the skill or technical trade courses such as masonry. Not all kids will go to college. These trades will help kids make a good living and keep them in the county. The CEAD project is good for agriculture in the county.
- The County also funds capital for the local Community Colleges.
- Funding from the state follows the students to go to Charter Schools.
- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/BUSINESS RETENTION AND DEVELOPMENT**
 - Everyone sees the need with varied tax base and job opportunities to keep young people in the county.
 - One of the biggest challenges is utilities, especially in rural areas. You need sewer and water for industrial sites.
 - Chairman Dickerson asked what is working in other rural counties? How are they having success in building their economic development? Neil Emory said active programs that help with economic growth such as loan programs and educational programs at colleges to train the people. Some counties also use land use to protect themselves from certain

industries. In recruitment, counties are having to make investments in water and sewer. This makes you competitive. Site ready spaces are more desired than shell buildings.

- Commissioner McVey said Caswell needs to have an Economic Developer, and we do not at this time. They need to promote the county and go out and do what is needed. We will need a pretty good size budget so they could entertain and take the companies out to recruit for Caswell.
- Commissioner Holt said half the county wants a bedroom and half wants industry. Neil Emory said it's too costly to run water and sewer all over the county. Bedroom counties have no tax base to support your services.
- Pelham Industrial Park is 2.8 miles from the new casino. The Board will have to decide if we will keep that land industrial or move toward hotels and restaurants. It is on the thorough fare from Greensboro and Winston Salem.
- Caswell will need to zero in on potential sites and water and sewer for those sites. It takes more investing, and there is money at the state level for that. Think about incentives.
- Don't forget about the businesses you already have, and know what their needs they have currently.
- Commissioner Yarbrough asked the County Manager how much interest does he get from business who want to locate in Caswell? County Manager Miller said I may get two calls a year.
- There is a 20 year return on economic development investments. You can look at small support industries that feed the larger companies. Also after the pandemic, people may see that they can live in rural areas if they have broadband. Broadband is a huge accomplishment for the county, and will give everyone more flexibility as to where they live.
- Commissioner Yarbrough asked are there any projections on how the casino will affect traffic flow in the county. Highway 86 will change. The County Manager said he asked how many people did they anticipate seeing in an average day, and he was told about two thousand. Five to six thousand on weekends. So Highways 86, 29, and even 62 to some degree will see a heavy increase in traffic. Upgrades on Highway 86 will help, but traffic will not originate from inside the county. That traffic will come from south of the County. Mebane has completed the bypass around Mebane and a lot of that traffic is going to flow down Highway 119 to 86. We need to press the state on upgrades to other areas of Highway 86 and 119. Shortening the commute times will bring people to the county also with the bypasses.
- The Casino will have hotels with 500 rooms and restaurants. There will additional needs for hotel space and Danville doesn't have adequate hotel space for the need.
- We have about 65 acres in the Pelham Industrial Park with a lot of road frontage to Highway 29 making it good for hotels and restaurants. Neil Emory said be sure you have

enough water because hotels take a lot of water for the sprinkler systems. Caswell has an agreement with Danville for water and sewage that is guaranteed.

- Neil Emory asked if Caswell had an Economic Development group to do projects, finance things, and put deals together outside the scope of County government. County Manager Miller said we do have a local Economic Development Commission but putting together the 501C-3 has been difficult with the way appointments have been made. The EDC looked at that a couple of years ago and just decided not to do it. 501C-3 doesn't have to follow all the limits as government entities such as bidding processes.

- **PUBLIC SAFETY**

- A problem most counties are having is getting and keeping Public Service employees.
- Chairman Dickerson said everyone seems to be throwing money at the problem. Thinking outside of the box, are there any ways to retain employees in rural counties? Neil Emory said you can't keep up with the larger counties, but stay in their taillights. You can also give them benefits that they cannot get at the bigger jurisdictions such as flexibility of schedules. Make sure it is a family atmosphere and build a sense of a team or family.
Commissioner Rose said the crime doesn't stop at the county line now. We have to find ways to retain employees and recruit them. Young people coming on now are not concerned about retirement like we were before. Flexibility to attend your child's sports activities is a perk. Public service has an obligation to the citizens of this county. Neil Emory said the employees have to get a sense of appreciation.
- Employees are not leaving because they want a raise, but salary is a component of that. They are being offered higher paid jobs. There is a lot of competition.
Frank Rose said there is no influx of interested applicants like it was years ago.
- Commissioner Rose asked what happens if you don't have enough personnel for staffing at the Sheriff's office? Neil Emory said it has been times that the Highway Patrol has stepped in to help. That is authorized, but they are short also. The County Manager asked would the county have to foot that bill? In the case of DSS, they would.
- Neil Emory asked what level Caswell was for EMS, and the County Manager said we are classified as a wilderness operation since we do not have a hospital inside the county. Neil Emory said counties with the higher tax base have the higher level of EMS and paramedics and also have a hospital within the county.
Caswell does have the VIPER radios for communication. County Manager Miller said the county provided \$125,000 and the State Highway Patrol contributed \$125,000 to upgrade our viper system so that we could go to 800 radios. Senator Berger gave the county an appropriation of \$125,000 and that is what we used.
- Caswell has one paid fire department employee in Semora. Neil said a lot of counties are finding that volunteers are disappearing. Now they are finding ways to fund these positions. Something that is beginning with volunteers.

❖ *Lunch break was taken after a blessing was offered by Commissioner Rose.*

❖ *Commissioner Rick McVey and Jennifer Hammock, Finance Director, left the meeting.*

- **STAFF RETENTION**

- Neil Emory said we have talked about ways to retain employees in the Public Safety section, but ask your Human Resources to look at other things. There are other things out there that other counties are doing to retain employees. Other ideas are the health insurance and maybe some flexibility in hours. The Board may need to ask HR to come back with ideas that the county can try to help retain employees that go beyond just salaries.

- **LIVABILITY (NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, PARKS AND RECREATION, HEALTH AND WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES)**

- These are things that the citizens are asking for and what they would like to see, and what the Board would like to see as far as environmental regulations that have impacted the county.
- Parks and Recreations: Neil Emory asks what role does the county play in Parks and Rec? The County Manager said programming and facility upkeep. Neil said this has changed a lot in most counties with travel teams being so popular. Commissioner Holt said he has not had many people pushing him about Parks and Rec. Commissioner Rose said he has visited Randy Jefferson at Parks and Rec. Mr. Jefferson is trying to implement a lot of new things for the kids and other things for the citizens can come and use such as the track. The Recreation Foundation came before the Board with a grant they received. The Rec competes with travel ball. Neil Emory said in rural areas it's getting kids that don't have transportation involved. Commissioner Rose said Mr. Jefferson is even looking at getting some adult league teams together. Neil asked about if we have a lot of seniors asking about access to walking trails? Commissioner Holt said we have a new trail about to open in Milton. Commissioner Rose said and we have a lot of activities at the Senior Center such as meal programs and activities. Commissioner Yarbrough said I think a lot of seniors, as in many rural counties, have a road that is not very traveled, and they get their exercise there. They come to Parks and Rec or the Senior Center. The County Manager said you new commissioners have not lived through baseball season yet. You will get calls about Parks and Rec during that time. You may want to be careful how you get mixed up in conflicts at Parks and Rec. It is important that you relay comments from parents back to staff because we do make changes based on their recommendations. An example was starting the season off earlier like other counties.
- Environmental Issues: Farmer Lake was a project done because it was funded for flood control. It is used for water and there is a huge capacity there. The County Manager said Yanceyville has perpetual water rights to Farmer Lake. The County owns the lake and the land around the lake. That is a 30 or 60 foot buffer around the lake, some land down at

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the back of the lake and the Farmer Lake boating dock. There are certain regulations in other jurisdictions that own the buffer that will lease that buffer to the home owner that's associated with the adjacent property to build docks. However, because this is a Class II or III lake, we are restricted from having docks on the lake. We are restricted on usage on the lake because it is drinking water. Yanceyville can sell the water to businesses that may be located near the lake. County Manager Miller said we would need to get legal counsel to check on this, but the County could use the water. Yanceyville just has perpetual rights to the water, but it doesn't prevent the County from using the water. Commissioner Holt asked if Yanceyville annexed an area of the county, would they have to provide sewer and water to that area. The County Manager said if you're looking at continuous annexation, they probably would have to, but there are parcels in the county that Yanceyville has annexed that they will never run water and sewer to. They annexed the future raw water treatment pumping station in Milton. Commissioner Holt said looking down the road some areas may run out of water, but that one resource we have plenty of in our county. County Manager Miller said the meeting rooms in Co-Square is named after bodies of water in the county. Rivers have their capacity so it will change the water flow. Be mindful of your natural resources.

- Neil Emory asked about solid waste and landfills. The County Manager said we had a landfill, but we do not any longer. Neil then asked who does your solid waste. The County Manager said we have a transfer station with First Piedmont.
- Zoning: Commissioner Holt said the majority of people do not want zoning in this county, but every time someone wants to build something in the county you hear zoning. Neil said they don't want their land zoned, but they want their neighbors land zoned. County Manager Miller said Tim actually made the most eloquent and most potent statement through that whole thing, and that is if zoning is good for one part of the county, it is good for the entire county. It helps us as staff identify where you want to focus your energy to run water and sewer lines. Zoning provides direction. Neil Emory said if you are going to have an industrial site, I would recommend at least look at zoning around that area to protect it. Commissioner Rose said how do you promote economic growth without it. Neil said it's hard. Zoning will help protect your home from a business being next door that will hard you. You give up some of your rights, but it protects you and your neighbor. Agriculture is exempt.
- Commissioner Rose asked how do you put restrictions in place to benefit industrial growth, but doesn't put the burden on the citizens of zoning. County Manager Miller said we did that by creating the HIDO, High Intensity Development Ordinance. This restricts land usage, but we cannot regulate business. By regulating land use, it automatically regulates business or where they can be located. A land use plan focus where types of business can go. Neil Emory said if you have something going on near your border and they can't do it there, where are they going. The risk you run with the Casino coming to Danville, is they will come to Caswell where they can. You have to have some control.

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Read some rural county zoning ordinances. You need to get ahead of the growth, because if you don't the growth will run you. Zoning protects you from what will come beside you. Most counties have zoning now. It may be 20 counties now that don't have zoning. Zoning is different from building or housing codes that regulate how you set the house. Sometimes it's good to ask like counties to hear about their experiences.

The wording on the referendum was not specific enough. It was too vague. It asked if you were in favor of zoning in the county.

- **OTHER SERVICES**

- **Revaluation:** Having a good revaluation is vitally important for the County. This can be a tough time for the county. A revaluation, for those that have not been through this, is about leveling the field. It's about trying to get the county back to 100% value. Sometimes during that 4 or 8 year cycle, you will have some homes that will drop in value. Other home values may have gradually increased. You get a lot of fluctuation in the market because the market changes a lot in 8 years. The revaluation is about bringing everyone back to market value. Having the right person to do the revaluation is so important. At the end of the day it's about the tax base and making it equal. Don't look at tax rates, but look at what you write the check for in January. It is a fairness issue. The value of the home should be a price you would sell your home for. It's an equity thing. Be mindful of the changes that have occurred in the past 4 to 8 years. Tax rates vary at different times in the revaluation process. Make sure they get fair and equitable square footage rates. The Commissioners sit as the Board of Equalization and Review, and this is where you hear appeals on people's taxes. It also impacts your utility values if you get below that 80%. It also helps to get everything that is taxable is on the books.
- **Including Commissioners in other meetings:** County Manager Miller said one of the things I've always done is include Commissioners in certain meeting we have. Commissioner Jefferies and I have had meeting with DOT out at his church and with Milton and their Town Council. Commissioner Rose and I had the casino meeting. The meeting we had yesterday, I have invited the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, but they couldn't attend. I've always had commissioner at meetings from time to time. It was mentioned to me that I needed to have more commissioners at meetings, so I wanted to make a statement about that. Commissioner Holt said I know you are referring to me, and I would like the opportunity to say yes or no. County Manager Miller said while I understand that, what I would say is that it is not always appropriate to have 3 or 4 commissioners at a meeting. The meeting I had with the casino was basically geared to public safety and workforce development. So when I thought of this Board, I thought of who on this Board has the most experience with public safety. I also thought about which commissioners district this would impact the most. When that happened, I invited Commissioner Rose. Neil Emory and Amy Cannon both said they did not invite commissioners with them when they attended meeting as a county manager. So County

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Manager Miller said maybe that is something I need to rethink. This was just to address the issue and it was not meant that way. The County Manager also called many of his public safety people, but he did not have them there because he didn't want to overload the room. This was the first meeting with the casino director. When a commissioner comes to a meeting, I'll put it out to the commissioners to have you let me know if you would like to attend. We can't have more than 4 attend. Commissioner Holt said maybe it should go through the Chairman. The County Manager said that will be what we do moving forward. Commissioner Rose said he learned a lot at this meeting. There will be an increase of traffic through the county. Caswell does have a good working relationship with the Danville police and fire departments. The casino will be more than just a place to gamble. They are going to have huge entertainment venues coming in. The purpose of this meeting was to start building a relationship. The casino did hold a job fair at Co-square and only 2 people showed up.

RETREAT SUMMARY AND COURSE OF ACTION:

Let's get an idea of where you go from here. We talked about board relations, and I encourage you to stay in touch with one another. If you have a problem with each other, call each other and ask where were you coming from on that. Work together as a group and do what's best for the county. Also be responsive to the concerns of the Board. With the Board of Education and higher education, here's what I picked up on. You need some basic information from the Board of Education such as fund balance, where they stand financially, the possibility of visiting them and seeing their capital needs. A future thought is seeing what they need can make a difference. We talked about ADM and the ask about their plan to approach that moving forward. Ask if they see the day that they may need to consolidate campuses for the good of the taxpayer. If we are going to keep that school, what is it going to cost us? What does it cost to run that school, and what can we save by closing the school? The County is responsible for their capital funds. You may also want to talk about their turnover rates and supplements. Finally, we talked about what the Board of Education and the Community College plans for teaching trades again and branching out and going back to some of the educational programs other than higher education. Is there a strategy to get people job ready for the work place? For new Board members it may be beneficial to have them take a few minutes to talk about budget. Economic Development, we talked about job ready sites. The follow up there is with Danville and how much secure water and the ability for fire suppression and sewer services at those sites. Also see if there is a provision that if Danville needs the water, can they shut Caswell off. The County Manager said ours is guaranteed, but I don't know the provisions. In Economic Development we also talked about protecting the industrial park and is there room for some type of protection there in regards to economic development. Finally, at some point do you re-explore investing some county money in the economic development program and maybe going back to the 501-C3 for revenues. You have to have that infrastructure in place is key. We talked about public safety, and the key issue there is retention of employees. Be mindful of the things you can do because you cannot compete with other units. You may have to invest more in salaries. How do you enhance that through HR and

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making it more attractive place to work? This includes flexibility and things like that. If you are a friendly place to work, it can make a difference. Make things personable. We talked about the livability of Parks and Rec and we will wait until baseball season on that. There may be some issues there, but be mindful that you have a lot of natural resources in Caswell. We also talked about the water access long term and clarify how much usage there is at the Dan River and your other water resources. How much potential you have at Farmer Lake. One thing coming up that we didn't touched on in health and wellness is the General Assembly has finally got around to doing Medicaid expansion. This will probably bring a lot of people in to your healthcare facilities and will have an impact on your citizens. This may also impact your budget with having the staff to sign them up. It is 600,000 North Carolinians will have insurance coverage that do not now. This may have more of an impact in counties that have a hospital. Livability is just being mindful of what citizens need. The revaluation was discussed. In staffing, remember don't surprise me and I won't surprise you. Give your Board members and the county manager feedback. The NCACC is with Caswell in regards to their finances. They are here to help us, and we are not alone in this. There is a lot of challenges ahead for the finance staff, but the NCACC is here to support them. Johna Sharpe and Amy Cannon has worked with other counties in similar situations and they have gotten themselves righted on the path. There are 100+ municipalities on the UAL, but only 12 counties. The NCACC's goal is to get all counties off that list and in good standing with the LGC. Johna will be on site at least one day a week and remote one day a week.

ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made at 1:36 pm by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried unanimously** to adjourn the Board of Commissioners work session.

Carla R. Smith
Clerk to the Board

John Dickerson
Chairman

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