

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEMBERS PRESENT

June 27, 2022
OTHERS PRESENT

Rick McVey, Chairman
David Owen, Vice Chairman
John Dickerson
Jeremiah Jefferies
Vernon Massengill
Steve Oestreicher

Bryan Miller, County Manager
Carla R. Smith, Clerk to the Board
Jennifer Hammock, Finance Director
Melissa Miller, Deputy Finance Officer
Melissa Williamson, Deputy County Manager
Aisha Gwynn, Assistant County Manager
Brian Ferrell, County Attorney (Remote)

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Caswell, North Carolina, met in a Budget Work Session on Monday, June 27, 2022 at 5:30 pm at the Gunn Memorial Library.

WELCOME:

Chairman McVey called the meeting to order and paused for a moment of Silent Prayer. Then the Board of Commissioners and all the guest in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

BUDGET WORK SESSION:

County Manager Miller said Mr. Chairman, how would you like to proceed? We have passed out a list to each Commissioner that outlines department capital outlay requests, personnel requests, public school requests, and special appropriations. Maybe it would be best if we went down these lists, the Commissioners discuss these items, and we move forward from there. The first capital request you have is from Information Technology. The total capital outlay request is \$124,650 to create a revolving computer replacement schedule. The first year is 2022 is 75 pcs, 50 monitors, 5 laptops, 5 desk spares, an EMS fiber upgrade, additional hardware replacements, and contracted services to total \$124,650. Commissioner Owen asked if that was included. County Manager Miller said all of those items were included in the budget. Commissioner Dickerson said I have a question before we get deep in on all these different issues. How much COVID money is actually in the budget covering expenditures that once the COVID money expires, revenues will have to be found to replace that lost money that we no longer have to pay for. In other words, how many vehicles, positions, and ongoing expenses are in this budget versus what we're going to have to continue to pay for after the COVID money's gone. County Manager Miller said so that's an interesting question because currently in the budget we have \$3,188,563 in revenue replacement which in reality is the ARPA dollars allocated. On average, we tend to appropriate \$1.9 million or \$1,880,547.50 in in fund balance. This year at current, we have zero fund balance applied to the budget. So year after year we return money to fund balance. Very seldom do we ever actually use the fund balance that we appropriate. So just this year alone we're returning \$827,327 to fund balance, and that's just from lapsed salaries alone.

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So that doesn't include the benefits associated with those or the longevity, FICA, and a lot of those things you're talking about. So a lot of counties create what they consider a plug in the budget, and the appropriated fund balance is usually the plug that they put in the balance. The plug is a number that they put in the budget and appropriate from fund balance to balance the budget. Most counties understand that a lot of that money from fund balance will never be used. Just like it is in our county. I think Rockingham uses about \$2.5 million every year as their plug from fund balance. A lot of smaller counties don't do that. They budget bare bones minimum, and I see the value in doing that both ways. There's definitely a mindset behind doing it both ways. So considering that we usually appropriate about \$1.9 million and never use it, and actually return money on top of the \$1.9 million that we appropriate. We're appropriating \$3,188,563 this year. Those dollars aren't applied specifically to reoccurring expenses. Those dollars are applied to both recurring expenses and the capital expenditures. I think if you look at your worksheet, you've got about \$930,000 worth of capital requests this year. Those requests are not going to come every year at that large amount. Commissioner Dickerson said the one off of Information Technology is a revolving situation that's going to continue every year from now on or at least the next four years. So that is one that will have to be covered right? The County Manager said well theoretically yes, but at any point in time the Board may choose not to do that. Just because this Board says yes we're going to cover it with this amount of money and whatever, it doesn't obligate the next Board, the Board after that, or the Board after that to be able to do that. Commissioner Dickerson said let me put it like this. You said that over three million dollars, \$3.2 million, and \$1.9 million is what you usually have. You still got like \$1.2 or \$1.3 million in extra COVID money that's in this budget that we're spending that will not be there next year. So any positions that are added or vehicles that are bought on a lease, we're going to have to pay for them. Plus, there may not be these same capital expenditures coming through next year, but there will be more undoubtedly in other areas. I am concerned about overspending versus the inflation that all of our citizens are facing and also the possibility of a recession coming in. We've already got a tax increase that's going to have to be implemented to start paying for the new high school. I noticed that Alamance County cut their tax rate this year, but we're not doing that. We're spending more than we normally spend, and we're in uncertain economic times. What happens when any of those things go sideways and we have to go back and raise taxes on the people in this county? That's not going to go over very well. County Manager Miller said I understand that that's a theoretical argument, and in a lot of ways it's true. However, Alamance has probably had a reval or a revaluation of their county since their last fiscal year, and because of that reval, they were able to cut their taxes rate. I don't know what their revenue neutral rate was, but I imagine they cut it back to revenue neutral or maybe not all the way back. Commissioner Dickerson said I know theirs is 65, and ours is 72. The County Manager said they get about \$800,000 for a one penny tax increase. We get about \$146,000 for a one-cent tax increase. So when they raise their taxes one cent, that's \$800,000 times whatever their tax rate is. It completely dwarfs our tax increase at \$146,000 per penny that we would get.

Commissioner Dickerson said the size of their budget completely dwarfs ours as well. We can go back and forth on this all night, but the thing is I don't want to put the county and citizens in a position where there's going to be a tax increase coming up on them in the middle of bad economic times. That's my reserve in all of this. So with that we can go forward. The County Manager said I think that's a valuable way to look at the budget. I think we all need to have a similar mindset and think about the residence when we talk about the budget and the impact on our residents with the tax rate. I agree with you 100%.

Mr. Chairman just out of respect for the people that we have in attendance, we do have our County Attorney on with us today. I know that was one of the items that you wished to discuss, and you wanted to add a closed session to speak with our County Attorney. Time may be spent better if we go into that conversation to begin with rather than have our County Attorney wade through all this with us. The Chairman said that was fine with him. The County Manager said if it suits the Board. The Chairman said I think there was some questions on whether we wanted to put him on the retainer or not. I guess this would be the time for you all to ask him questions or for us to decide what we're going to do about this. County Manager Miller said so once again I'll just reiterate what our County Attorney told you before. If it's questions about performance, then that's a closed session item. If it's questions or comments about the contract, that's not a closed session item. Is that correct, Brian Ferrell? County Attorney Ferrell said I think that's basically correct. I mean you do have some leeway to talk about terms of employment for public officials in closed session, but my agreement's out there and the terms are out there. So I'm comfortable having an open session conversation about the terms outlined in the contract. If you'd like to talk with me about performance, that's certainly something you could go into closed session to do if you so choose. So the manager has it right. Chairman McVey said I think at one time there was some questions about the contract. Commissioner Dickerson said it was discussed last meeting. I don't think there's anything extra to be added to it at this point. Chairman McVey asked if any other Commissioners had questions. I guess not Mr. Ferrell. County Attorney Ferrell said okay. Well again if you anything comes up, I'm always happy to have a conversation about the proposed contract. Again whether we go with the traditional model we've had for a number of years or we move to this more flat fee retainer, it's within your discretion. I'm open to either option. I will note there'd be a slight increase in fees if we went to the traditional agreement that we've had in place. Right now my monthly retainer on that is \$3,500 a month, and it's \$185 an hour for every hour after 16 hours. My proposal, if you wanted to stay with the same arrangement, would be to go up \$250 a month in the retainer. So that would be \$3,750, and then increase the hourly rate from \$185 to \$200. Just to give you some perspective, my hourly rate for my private clients is \$350 an hour. So it still would reflect a significant local government discount. Although I don't offer any other local governments I work with quite a steep discount, but I'm willing to do that for Caswell. If you like the option, the more traditional option that we've had over the years, obviously the flat fee retainer has the benefit of taking most of that work and putting it into the usual monthly fee. So if there's no further questions, I know you

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have a full agenda, I'll just stop Mr. Manager unless you need me for something else. County Manager Miller said Mr. Chairman, do we need him? Chairman McVey asked if anybody had any more questions. Commissioner Jefferies had a question. Commissioner Jefferies said I heard something about \$300 an hour. County Attorney Ferrell said yes that's my normal hourly rate. I'm sorry I didn't mean to interrupt you. That was my normal private hourly rate which is \$350 an hour. That's what my private clients pay me. County Manager Miller and Commissioner Owen said that's not what we pay. Mr. Ferrell said not even close. I was giving it for a bit of comparison. Commissioner Jefferies said he know he heard \$300. Mr. Ferrell said don't choke on that number. We're not going anywhere close to that. The County Manager thanked Mr. Ferrell. Attorney Ferrell left the meeting at 5:46 pm.

County Manager Miller said so back to Information Technology and capital outlay requests. So as you'll see on the spreadsheets you've been given, there's approved by the Board and amount approved. As we move through here we'll fill in those amounts and go from there. Chairman McVey asked if the Board wanted to go through each item? Commissioner Massengill asked what is additional hardware replacement? County Manager Miller said that would be like switches, cabling, modems, and smaller pieces of equipment. Commissioner Massengill said so he has a four-year plan, and the County Manager said yes, a four-year plan. Then Commissioner Massengill said the four-year plan will upgrade everything we've got in the county i.t wise, and the County Manager said that's correct. Commissioner Massengill said will he have to turn around after four years because we all know computers are obsolete almost where you turn them on. The County Manager said yes. So there's about a three to four-year life expectancy on the computer or useful life expectancy. So it's very possible that this will be an ongoing expense. Commissioner Massengill then said so he and we should be wanting to be active versus reactive. Is that what this plan is telling us? County Manager Miller said yes, this is trying to keep our local government employees up to date and virus free with the technology that will work for them and work for the government and interface with other technologies that we may need to implement later on. Commissioner Oestreicher said you remember last meeting, I asked the question about leasing versus purchasing. County Manager Miller said yes I do, and we've looked at that. Leasing computers overall seems to be more expensive than buying them outright. For a three or four-year lease on a computer, you're going to pay about \$1,500 more than you would per computer than if you just bought the computer. At the end of that lease the computer is three to four years old, and it's reached the end of its useful life expectancy. So it really holds no value at that point in time, and we would still recommend purchasing the computers rather than leasing them. Commissioner Jefferies asked if leasing, would you have a technology man to upkeep them? Would that go with the lease? County Manager Miller said no not unless you hired an outside firm to come in and do it. Then Chairman McVey asked if there were any more questions on technology? Commissioner Owen said we'll go ahead and approve those amounts. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if we're going to vote on each one of these? Chairman McVey

said we will wait till the end. If we need to pick something apart, we'll pick it apart and then we can vote on what we're going to vote on.

County Manager Miller said so next is the maintenance budget. It's \$273,000 capital outlay. Commissioner Oestreicher said that's the same that's in the book, and County Manager Miller said yes. Commissioner Jefferies asked do we really need the parking lot paved at Guilford Mills? We don't have a whole lot going on over there. County Manager Miller said well it's getting to the point where some of the conditions around the building are unsafe, and in my opinion, we do need to pay some attention to Guilford Mills. Chairman McVey asked if there were any more questions on maintenance budget, and Commissioner Massengill asked what's the contingency down there for \$24,915? County Manager Miller said a lot of times in the maintenance budget we do see a contingency. The contingency is for the one-offs or the unforeseen things that maintenance may run into throughout the year, and it could be anything from a busted water pipe to whatever the case may be. In the life of a maintenance technician, it could be anything like a roof repair that needs to be done, busted water pipe, wall repair such as we saw with the flooding at the Register of Deeds. It could be a number of things.

The County Manager said so if you're ready, we'll move on to the Sheriff's \$190,877 capital outlay which includes the patrol vehicles lease program, the up fit of patrol vehicles, and the armored vests. Chairman McVey asked if the eight vehicles in this lease program keeps us on track for rotation? County Manager Miller said that's correct. Commissioner Dickerson asked what are these eight vehicles being used for? If there's 28 already on Fleet? You've got 16 deputies on patrol for the various shifts with two supervisors, and that's 18 vehicles. Where are the rest of the vehicles being used? County Manager Miller said we also have investigators, the command structure, the sergeant or the captains, and majors within the department. Obviously you've got the sheriff, and you've got narcotics. Commissioner Dickerson said well I see the narcotics, and I see supervisors. But speaking about the elephant in the room, the big wheels are in office that are going back and forth. Do they need a brand new county vehicle to go back and forth to work on if they're going to be in the office all day long? They're not out on patrol. County Manager Miller said here again, that would have been a wonderful question to ask the Sheriff. Commissioner Dickerson said well I asked what the number of vehicles were out on patrol. That's where my numbers from the 16 and two come from. I realized they got narcotics officers, and we talked about adding another one which by the way he's got funding to pay for that. I'm trying to figure out where the rest of these vehicles are necessary at. I don't want to put the officer in the room on blast if he doesn't want to answer the question, but could you elaborate on that or would you rather not. County Manager Miller said I know the Sheriff's Department set out with a plan many years ago to get into the rotation schedule to rotate these cars out to where the county didn't have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars every year to buy new cars and to where the cars that they did have were reliable. I think that's where we are now. We're finishing up that last leg of this program. Commissioner Owen said because we are in our third year right? County Manager Miller said that's right. Commissioner Owen said which means some of those

vehicles are going to go out. I didn't bring that list with me, but they're still patrol vehicles that we have not gotten out of service that need to be out of service. Some of them I believe we still own. Commissioner Dickerson asked how long were the leases for the first three-year cycle that has been approved for those 28 vehicles? How long is that lease? County Manager Miller said four-year lease. Commissioner Dickerson said so that first year lease has not even come back around to be enough. County Manager Miller said no and that's why you run it in a cycle. It's a four-year cycle; so this finishes out the cycle. Commissioner Dickerson said still the math don't add up. 28 versus 18 and you throw in the narcotics officers and the supervisors but you're still not plateauing that 28 cars. I'm just questioning out loud what the value of spending that kind of money is. The armored vest, I see that all day long. Vehicles, I have questions about that. Well go on to the next one, I don't want to hold it all up talking about that one thing tonight.

The County Manager said the next one is 9-1-1 communications for complete flooring in offices. The next capital outlay request we have is from EMS for new furniture for the EMS base. The next capital outlay request we have is for Farmer Lake for a shelter for a county boat. The next capital outlay request we have is for the Health Department for \$85,754 for a covered portico outside of the Health Department to help facilitate drive-through clinics. The next category you see on your sheet is emergency telephone service for \$100,000. That is state money not county money. It's provided from the 911 fund from the state.

The next category we have is CATS transportation for \$129,379 for new radio antenna cable mounts, replace onboard security cameras, and new scheduling and billing software. Once again this is an enterprise fund. Commissioner Massengill said unless you have potential grant funding. Has any of it been applied for? Melissa Williamson said yes, all of it has. Where the \$90,000 is for the billing software, and that's going to be where we apply for a grant for ARPA funds. We know that we're getting that money, but we just are waiting on the agreements. So that will be covered at 100%. For the radios and the security cameras, we have already put in for the funding and should be hearing any time now, and I feel certain they'll be approved. They will be covered 90%. Commissioner Massengill said so essentially most of that will not be county dollars. Melissa Williamson said no county dollars. Whatever our match is will come out of our enterprise funds. Commissioner Dickerson said so that \$129,000 total is basically covered? Melissa Williamson said it's no county dollars.

Commissioner Massengill said go back up to the Health Department for a minute. Where is the whatever you called it going to be? On the EMS side or on the parking lot on the sheriff's side. County Manager Miller said I believe it's going to be on the EMS side. Commissioner Massengill said all the way from the front door all the way out the side part of the parking lot. The County Manager said the parking lot will be extended to where you can drive through.

Then the County Manager said moving on the personnel request. Commissioner Owen said before you go there just to make sure that, I can't keep up with all the pages, all these items were in the budget or not? County Manager Miller asked Melissa Miller if she could answer that.

Melissa Miller said yes. The County Manager said okay so you're ready to move on personnel request. All right personnel request.

Register of Deed requested a part-time Deputy Register of Deeds, and the amount is \$34,790 which includes benefits. Commissioner Massengill asked are we saying yea or nay now, and the County Manager said it would be helpful if you want to say no to say no to it as we go through it. Commissioner Massengill said I don't see the purpose in that one no, and Chairman McVey, and Commissioners Owen, Oestreicher, and Jefferies agreed by saying no.

The County Manager said next full-time help desk administrative for \$45,202 with benefits included for **Information Technology**. The salary is \$31,200. Commissioner Owen said it was included in the budget correct? Melissa Miller and County Manager Miller replied yes. Commissioner Massengill said this one gave me a lot of angst. As you all probably know I've called a couple of mayors and one of them is a former mayor. One told me that when he was mayor but he's in the NC House now, it was six. I don't have false teeth, but they almost fell out. Six in a town. My opinion only. If the I.T. gentleman has a four-year plan, I'm not sure how you can carry it out with two after talking with the people that I've talked with. So my thought process is yes on the I.T guy. Chairman McVey said from talking to department heads I'm saying yes. Commissioners Owen, Oestreicher and Jefferies said yes, and Commissioner Dickerson said I'll say no.

Moving on to the **Sheriff's Department** full-time First Sergeant for patrol Narcotics \$45,980 and a full-time Deputy SRO to cover Parks and Rec and the library from 12 p.m to 7 p.m. Commissioner Dickerson said I thought that was going to be a part-time position. The County Manager said when we added up the hours that were needed, Parks and Rec starts open gym at 12 o'clock and the library closes at 7 o'clock. At seven hours it only made sense, if you're going to approve, it to budget it as a full-time position. Then Commissioner Dickerson said the full-time position for narcotics, did you ever get any feedback on whether or not the opioid settlement money coming in will cover or be able to cover close to it. Commissioner Owen said Commissioner Dickerson I thought all of you would have received this about the opioid money that they were saying we're going to get each year. The first year we're going to get \$136,000, then \$74,000 the next year, \$89,000, \$92,000, \$57,000 and so on. If that's how we're going to pay for that, that should cover it for the next however many years you want to go with it. Commissioner Massengill asked is there stipulations on it? The County Manager said there are and that's my concern. I've reached out to the NCACC (NC Association of County Commissioners) and PTRC (Piedmont Triad Regional Council). I'm not exactly sure that that's one of the uses that would be approved for that. I think we can probably work within some guidelines to get to where it's approved. I'm not sure that it's clear-cut approved uses. The funding definitely will be enough to cover the position. Chairman McVey said so if we go with the narcotics agent and SRO, can we talk to the Sheriff to see if we can get him to, especially since we're funding this narcotics agent, just send somebody by the library a couple of times in

the afternoon from the three o'clock schedule. Have them drop by there, go by Parks and Rec, and not have to hire an SRO just particularly to do that? Commissioner Dickerson said I think it sounds like a good idea. Chairman McVey said I would be willing to fund a narcotics agent, but I would want to the Sheriff to be able to go by and take care of the library and Parks and Rec. Commissioner Owen said I don't believe this necessitates full time. I think going by there on occasion, making a presence, and being there for a little bit with advice. County Manager Miller said Commissioners I believe if you were to go in that direction adding a little bit of part-time money to the Sheriff's budget or overtime money could probably get you there with some of the SROs that are going to be employed for the school system. I think having them work a little bit over time after work can probably have the same effect. Chairman McVey said that would work with me, and Commissioner Oestreicher said I'm good with that. Commissioner Massengill said so we're going to fund the full-time narcotics agent and not the full-time library person. Is that correct? Commissioner Owen and Chairman McVey said that's what we're saying.

Full-time adult social worker for **DSS**. Commissioner Massengill said all right in our conversation with her at the last meeting, she acknowledged she had six vacancies. I would not be for this particular position. If she could find a social worker, use one of those six empty spots and salary that she has for that social worker and not give another full-time salary that would just sit there. That'd be seven open positions she would essentially have; so I'm not for full-time DSS. Chairman McVey said in other words, you can use your lapsed salaries on the oversight. Commissioner Jefferies said what happens if she fills those 6 positions. People was working overtime, and I had talked about getting an outside firm to fill some of these positions. These 6 vacancies. Commissioner Massengill said I didn't say she didn't need them. I feel like if they're vacant and they've been vacant, I'm not sure she's going to be able to fill those six much less another for the seventh. That's the tough part today. Not that she doesn't need them, it's finding who will do it number one and go from there. Chairman McVey said I think if we better use the lapsed salaries for the one person that she will hire or however she wants to do it. Then if something changes and six people suddenly come in to apply for this job and really want them, then they need to come back talk to the Board. Mr. Jefferies said we don't need to come talk, but make a promise that if she comes back and still need this additional position. WE don't want to have her come back and we still behind. We need to know what we will do. Commissioner Dickerson said I agree with Commissioners Massengill and McVey. If they've got six vacancies, I don't see adding this to their payroll. The County Manager said just so I make sure I understand this, you're not opposed to her hiring a person to fill this role, but she needs to stay within the current budget she has. Commissioner Massengill said what's her total employee number right now? 56. County Manager Miller said thereabout. Commissioner Massengill said okay, she needs to stay within that personnel frame. Mr. Miller said okay. Then Commissioner Jefferies said so this is what we saying then that we don't need to find this person. Commissioner Massengill said No, she can hire them, but using the money from the lapsed salaries. Commissioner Jefferies said I understand you saying use the lapsed salaries, but the people are

over worked and can't keep up. Mrs. Moorefield was talking about hiring some of the retired people. Commissioner Owen said but those will be at minimal \$38 per hour. Commissioner Jefferies said that's fine, she can use the lapsed salaries. I have no problem with that, but if things come back the Board needs to understand that this department needs that position.

County Manager Miller said so moving on to the **Health Department** full-time administrative assistant \$45,777 with a salary of \$31,680 and the benefits associated with it. There's also a full-time Environmental Health Specialist at total salary of 67,539 with the salary of \$49,844 and benefits, retirement, and health insurance added into that. Commissioner Massengill said aren't mental health specialists hard to find, and County Manager Miller said yes. Commissioner Massengill said the health department did a great job during COVID. As good as anybody around, but the Health Department does not have home health any longer. So in my opinion only I would be in favor of the Environmental Health Specialist but not in favor of the administrative assistant. Chairman McVey said the Environmental Health Specialist, that's where you were talking about combining all that stuff in environmental health. County Manager Miller said yes. Commissioner Massengill said who would be stepping up into these current environmental specialist spot. County Manager Miller said yes. Chairman McVey said I can go with the Environmental Health Specialist, but I'm not going to go with the administrative assistant. Commissioner Dickerson said back up on that full-time environmental health. You said where you were condensing positions. I thought we talked about that under the building inspector. Refresh my memory on the Environmental Health Specialist. County Manager Miller said so the current Environmental Health Director would move up to Central Permitting Director, and replace the current Chief Building Inspector. Then an Environmental Health Specialist would be hired for that department to take on some of the responsibilities and the field work that the Environmental Health Director, now Central Permitting Director, had. Commissioner Dickerson said it confused me a little bit. So you are going to consolidate and have a Central Permitting Director, which is still replacing or adding another position in full-time environmental health. So we've got a net gain of one employee even though you have consolidated positions. County Manager Miller said there's not a net gain of one employee. Commissioner Massengill said because the building inspector you are leaving one off. This is the two that are currently there, but when the current Building Inspector retires you will not have a net gain. Chairman McVey said and he is expected to retire soon, and the County Manager said within the next two months. Chairman McVey said full-time Environmental Health Specialist and not an administrative assistant at this time. Commissioner Owen said full-time Environmental Health Specialist. Commissioner Oestreicher said I'm good with the full-time Environmental Health Specialist, but I'd like to know a little bit more about the administrative assistant. Commissioner Jefferies said I will go with the Full-time Environmental Health Specialist. Commissioner Dickerson said I will go with the full-time Environmental Specialist and not the full-time assistant.

County Manager Miller said moving on to **Administration**, the HR Director in training. Chairman McVey said your HR Director is retiring soon. The County Manager said yes,

December 31st. Chairman McVey said December 31st and your action for this is to bring somebody in and get them trained so they can step in and we won't have the mess that we might have otherwise. County Manager Miller said yes. Commissioner Dickerson said so are you saying this is a new position, but it eventually is going to not be because when the other one leaves you're not going to add another one when she retires. County Manager Miller said that's correct, and we're going to forego the admin position for six months until our HR Director retires. So there will be an additional savings of I'm guessing \$18,000 to \$19,000. Commissioners Owen, McVey, Massengill, Oestreicher, Jefferies and Dickerson were good with this position.

Next the County Manager said **Central Permitting Director**. That's filling the Chief Building Inspectors role now with the Central Permitting Director. Promoting from within, there would be an increase in current salary of about ten thousand dollars. Commissioner Owen said so what's this? Chairman McVey said yes, we were confusing this with the full time Environmental Health Specialist. Commissioner Owen said that was a little confusing to begin with. Was this included in a budget? County Manager Miller said yes. Commissioner Owen said it was included in the budget. I just wanted to make sure that. Commissioners McVey and Oestreicher said they were good with the position. Commissioner Massengill said I'm good with one caveat. We need to make sure because this is only going to leave one in the building inspectors office, where as we stand today there's two. According to the retiring Building Inspector, the one can handle the job. My fear is that our fire inspections should not go lacking. At some point in time, there may be a necessity to have a part-time a fire inspector and co-mingle some duties with somebody who is or will be a certified fire inspector. I'm in agreement with the Central Permitting person, but just keep in mind those of you who are going to be on the Board that that may come up. We do not want to get caught under any circumstances not inspecting the schools, family care homes, and businesses as is required. We just don't want to entail a suit because somebody has a fire, somebody's hurt, or somebody's killed, they asked for the inspection records, and the inspection records aren't there. Commissioner Dickerson said Commissioner Massengill are you saying that if this position is put in place that you're suspecting we're going to have to have another one on that road? That we're not going to be able to do it with one person. Commissioner Massengill said I'm not saying that. I'm saying we need to keep that in mind. I don't know how many building permits they issue right now. If building permits pick up or slack, it could be dependent on whether that fire inspections are done. They're doing a good job right now, but there's two of them. Chairman McVey said so what you're saying essentially is when it comes down to being one, we anticipated this quite some time ago that's the reason there's two Building Inspectors now, if they get behind on fire inspections, there is a possibility of contracting some of it out. Commissioner Massengill said contracting some of it out or co-mingling a position like they did with the Assistant and Deputy County Manager or somebody like that. That's just something to be thinking about. Commissioner Oestreicher asked if there was anyone who had certification? Commissioner Massengill said we do have some that are getting through certification sometime

early October. Commissioner Owen asked if Commissioner Massengill knew by chance how many schools or if all the schools had been done this year? Commissioner Massengill said he feel they have already done the schools. The schools are the biggie. The schools, family care homes, and the assisted living homes are the ones that are required yearly. Businesses, depending on the business, are required every three years.

The County Manager said okay now we have **Family Services** full-time financial administration position. It's a grant funded position. So here again being a grant funded position, if the grant goes away and the county doesn't receive the money to fund that position, the position goes away. Chairman McVey said as long as they understand that in Family Services, I'll go along with it. Hire whoever you want to, but if that grant goes away, they are gone. Commissioners Owen, McVey, Massengill, Oestreicher, Jefferies, and Dickerson were good with that.

County Manager Miller said all right moving along to **Public School** requests. Commissioner Owen said I really don't care about going through each of these because you know I would recommend we do what we did last year with them. For instance, with capital outlay I think it's what four? County Manager Miller said \$465,000. Commissioner Owen said it comes from that sales tax money that has to go to capital outlay for school. Chairman McVey said so last year we gave them \$2.6 million, \$465,000 for capital outlay, and they were given \$55,000 for a social worker last year. Commissioner Owen said we've done that social worker for several years. Chairman McVey said so in my opinion, we give them what we gave them last year. Commissioners Massengill, Dickerson, Oestreicher, and Jefferies agreed with the Chairman. The County Manager confirmed the total amount would be \$3,120,000.

So moving along to **Special Appropriations**. Commissioner Owen said I think I know, but just so everybody knows which of these have gone up from last year. I think Caswell Parish has gone up. I can't remember if we gave them \$10,000 or \$15,000. Commissioner Massengill said I thought it was \$10,000. Commissioner Owen said they served a lot more citizens during COVID. I just want to know which of these have increased. Melissa Miller said Caswell Parish increased by \$5,000. It was \$10,000 last year, and then the forestry was \$74,579 last year. The animal shelter was under \$30,000 last year, food council was a thousand last year, and historical was \$10,000 last year. Horticulture stayed the same at \$6,000. Caswell Partnership for children stayed the same at \$3,000 last year and \$3,000 this year. Chairman McVey said does that stand for the arts council, and Melissa Miller said yes, it stayed the same. Commissioner Oestreicher said the increases here come out of ARPA money basically? The County Manager said no, they come out of general funds. Commissioner Oestreicher said which is fed by the ARP dollars and County Manager Miller said and tax dollars. Commissioner Dickerson said gentlemen, I'm going to just throw it out there and see where it goes. I would like to see them get what they got last year, and nobody gets an increase. If we don't start looking at the outlays and spending extra money, it's going to come back to bite a future Board. There will be a tax increase in the future because we're going to overspend. What are your thoughts? Commissioner Massengill said my

thoughts are the animal shelters are busting at the seams all over because people can't afford to feed their pets. I think it would be neglectful for us to not at least increase them because the cost of everything they do goes up. Caswell Parish is the most utilized and underfunded special organization in this county. They help more people than most people in this county know. Now the rest of it, I'll be quiet. Chairman McVey said all right let's go down the list. Arts council, you want to leave it where it's at? Commissioner Massengill said remind me again what it was. County Manger Miller said \$2,500. Consensus to give them the same. Caswell Parish, it was \$10,000, and they're requesting \$15,000 said the County Manager. Commissioner Massengill said that probably only pays for all the gas they use. Commissioners Massengill, McVey and Oestreicher said yes. Chairman McVey said I thought you said something. Commissioner Owen said well I mean I know this organization very well. They provide citizens with clothing, if there's a fire, it's just so much they encompass that we don't know about necessarily. I know we've given them \$10,000 for the last few years, and I know we were able to give them some monies from our first download of money from the federal government. I can't remember what we gave them. I'm going to say yes. Commissioners Jefferies and Dickerson said yes also. Partnership for Children, it's \$3,000 requested, and it's been \$3,000 for the last several years. Chairman McVey said it stayed the same, and I'll say yes. Board gave consensus. Cooperative forestry service requested \$98,146. Commissioner Owen asked what was that last year? County Manager Miller said it was \$74,579 last year. I'll just say from my perspective that forestry honestly only asks for what they need every year in capital and in the money they use to operate within the county. They've always been very upfront and honest with the money that they've requested. They do a good job in this county. Commissioner Massengill said from my perspective and fire service, we sure are glad to see that green truck. We're really glad. Also what a lot of people don't know, North Carolina Forestry Service provides \$5,000 matching grants to each fire department in this county. Last year everybody got the \$5,000 so that was \$50,000 that came back to the county for the fire departments. Of course we had to match it, but I'm a yes on that. Commissioner Owen said well I'm a yes simply because of the initial attack vehicle. That's a capital outlay item to me that's not going to be reoccurring. There Consensus of the Board was yes. Animal Protection Society or animal shelter. Chairman McVey said we gave them \$130,000 and they are going up \$10,000. I think you need to. Commissioners McVey, Massengill, Oestreicher, and Jefferies voted yes and Commissioner Dickerson and Owen voted no. Commissioner Owen said no simply because if we did anything it would be \$135,000. Chairman McVey said we got four so I'm going to say we give them the \$140,000 or whatever they asked for. Local foods council requested \$2,500, and they received a thousand dollars for the last couple years. So there's an increase of \$1,500. Chairman McVey said so local food council, that's not your meals on wheels kind of thing. County Manager Miller said no. Commissioner Massengill said is that the soup kitchen? The County Manager said yes, and they also operate the farmers market. That's being headed up in large part by our cooperative extension director now. I believe he's taking the reins as chair in person for that organization. I think they're doing

some really good things. Commissioner Massengill said sure was a lot of cars out there last Thursday. It was packed. Chairman McVey said I'm going to say since it's packed and seems like it's doing well that we give them what we gave them last year. Commissioner Massengill asked what did we give them, and the response was \$1,000. Commissioner Jefferies said I vote for \$1,500. Commissioner Dickerson said I go with \$1,000 like the gentleman to my right. Commissioner Owen said I can go \$1,000 or \$1,500. Commissioner Massengill said I like Mr. Jefferies \$1,500, and Commissioner Oestreicher agreed with \$1,500. Commissioner Jefferies said they are doing a good job out there. Commissioner Massengill agreed, and said if you've never been to the soup kitchen, it's pretty darn good. Chairman McVey said all right it's \$1,500.

So next we have Caswell Horticultural Club. They're asking for \$6,000, and they received \$6,000 last year. Chairman McVey said give them the same. Commissioner Owen said I really would like to increase it. They do a lot of work. Chairman McVey said well I know they do a tremendous amount of work. Commissioner Owen said they are very budget friendly, but I'm good with \$6,000.

Caswell Historical Association, they're asking for \$20,000, and they received \$10,000 last year. Commissioner Dickerson said I say give them what they got last year. Commissioner Owen said give them what they got last year. Commissioner Oestreicher said they bring in a lot of tourists, and the building is in desperately need of repair. Chairman McVey said would you consider \$15,000 instead of \$20,000? Commissioners Dickerson, Jefferies, and Owen voted \$10,000. Commissioner Oestreicher voted \$20,000. Commissioner Massengill said this one shouldn't be this tough, but that house is in bad shape. I got to admit so \$20,000. Chairman McVey said I'm on \$15,000. County Manager Miller said we can agree that \$20,000 is probably off the table. So your choices now are \$10 or \$15 thousand or you can split the difference for \$12,500. Commissioner Dickerson said average it out. Chairman McVey said let's do \$15,000. Commissioner Dickerson said I say \$12,500. \$15,000 is not the middle ground. If you do the average, you got what 2 for 20, 3 for 10, and the 15. It didn't come up quite fifteen. The Board agreed on \$12,500.

County Manager Mill said Commissioner, the one thing we haven't spoken about today is the Ford Focus cars. It was not on the capital outlay request. It was not included in your original budget. The yearly cost for replacing all eight of the Ford Focus vehicles is \$38,000. 38 000 a year to replace the Ford Focus vehicles. Commissioner Massengill asked if he was referring to all eight, and the County Manager said yes. Chairman McVey said \$38,000 a year and that's over a four-year period. The County Manager said yes. Chairman McVey said we're already having trouble with them. County Manager Miller said every department that I've spoken about seems to be having the same issues with most if not all the vehicles. Chairman McVey said which is transmissions mainly? County Manager Miller said well it's the car jumping and bouncing. It seems like transmission. I would hate to think we have eight Ford Focuses and all eight of the Ford Focuses have transmission problems. That would speak to a very, very large problem for

Ford. However, I did do some research on the 2017 Ford Focus, and it does seem like that model year 2016-2017 did have some major transmission issues and some overall issues with vibration and other things. I think we're at a point now to where we still have some equity in the vehicles. If we replace the vehicles now, we can capitalize on the equity. If we don't replace the vehicles now, we may not be able to capitalize on the equity in future years. Chairman McVey said the \$38,000 was for all eight, and County Manager Miller said yes. Chairman McVey said so if you dropped it down to six, I know it's not going to make that much difference, but where would you be at 6? County Manager Miller said I got it here, just give me a minute. Commissioner Massengill said if this is not already in, this is going to be extra over and above everything else that's been presented. County Manager Miller said yes. So 1-3 is about \$25,000, but let's say \$26-27,000 a year. For six, we'll say 27 asked Chairman McVey. County Manager Miller said let me go back to the other spreadsheet I had. The pretty spreadsheet that Jennifer put together for us. Commissioner Oestreicher said it's \$38,000 for 8. Commissioner Dickerson said gentlemen, I would like to suggest or just throw it out there and see how far it gets that we wait and see what the inflation does in this economy. Whether or not it be a recession? Push this off until next year. It's not in the budget; this extra money has been added to it. We've got to exercise some kind of restraint or reserve, or it's going to wind up coming back to bite future Boards. They're going to have to raise taxes, and nobody wants that. County Manager Miller said so Commissioners, currently you cut out of the budget \$945,481 in the tabs that we have been through so far. Commissioner Massengill said where are these Ford Focuses right now? County Manager Miller said you got a two at DSS, three at the Health Department, two at the Senior Center being used to deliver meals on wheels, and one is my vehicle. Commissioner Oestreicher said you would replace these with leased vehicles of similar size? County Manager Miller said well they would be replaced by similar vehicles. I'm hoping they would be a little bit larger. That's one of the problems now with the vehicles. Commissioner Oestreicher said you're not replacing them with SUVs? County Manager Miller said well actually they're being replaced with Ford Focuses, which is a smaller SUV type vehicle. Escapes not Focuses. Commissioner Oestreicher said because they're going to be worthless next year. Chairman McVey said I'd say do six of them if you going to do it to keep that cost down as much as possible. Commissioner Dickerson said all right here we go again. I'd say replace none of them. Commissioner Owen said how much is the state contract on these escapes? County Manager Miller said \$21,500. Commissioner Owen said I'll just throw this out. Do we have to put them on lease? Why not buy? I know what we're trying to do, but I'm also thinking about down the road. If you buy them, you're done with that. It's going to be all new vehicles. Not necessarily all eight. Is that what we want to do? We want to put all our vehicles on lease. Chairman McVey said I think you're better off to lease. They go through that lease maintenance program and everything. Where our vehicles, you say they're on that maintenance program. Commissioner Oestreicher said you're having the same discussion. Chairman McVey said I'm at six. Commissioner Dickerson said zero, Jefferies said five or six, Oestreicher at 20, Massengill at six, Owen at six. The Consensus was six.

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Chairman McVey said all right I got a question. We had not talked about the attorney contracts. That should be next. What's your feelings? Commissioner Owen said I wasn't here, but I did read the minutes with questions and answers. I will say this, especially when I was Chair, I always felt like I couldn't call Brian Ferrell because of comments made by other Board members saying well every time you call him you're costing us money. I don't like that. I think any Board member ought to be able to call the attorney if they have questions about something. We all try to go through Bryan I think. Bryan Miller had to get in touch with Brian Ferrell and then he researches the question. The retainer, how much more was that a month. Commissioner Massengill said \$150 a month. County Manager Miller said it's a total of \$78,000 a year. Commissioner Massengill said if you went the way you're going right now. I think that's what it is. Chairman McVey asked Commissioner Owen if that was what he was asking. Commissioner Owen said no, if we go the other route. Commissioner Massengill asked is there a minimum time? I think he said so many hours for that \$78,000. County Manager Miller said 16. Commissioner Massengill said 16 hours per month. When you call him, and you talk to him for two minutes and 12 seconds? County Manager Miller said it's 15 minutes. Commissioner Massengill said it bill's in 15 minute increments regardless. Okay, so if you call him four times and talk three minutes each time, you've just been billed for an hour? County Manager Miller said yes, but there's no 3 minute conversations. When I call, I don't call for one thing. There's usually multiple reasons that I'll call. I'll wait till I have a string of things to call about. I'm very conscious about that. Chairman McVey said that's why in my opinion we put him on a retainer. If I feel like I need to talk to the attorney, I call Bryan Miller and I got to wait till he gets three or four things lined up. Mr. Ferrell's got to hunt stuff, and it may be several days before I get an answer. I feel that, like David Owen said, each Board members should be able to call him. So I'm thinking you put him on retainer, and I think it will pay in the long run. Commissioner Massengill said well when we look at that sheet you gave us; it was about that much every year anyway. Commissioner Owen said I was thinking we were close to that. Commissioner Oestreicher said it's about a wash. County Manager Miller said I'll remind the Board that from the time I came, the year previous to me coming, and the first year I was here, those years were about \$96-\$97,000 a year. So it's still a \$20,000 drop from those years. Commissioner Owen said basically we stay like we are and he goes up on the monthly retainer and the hourly rate. Not much, but he does. Commissioner Dickerson said Mr. Miller question. With the expenditures for the attorney for this Board, the tax collection, and all the other legal bills that this county has incurred, at what point in time are we better off to hire a full-time attorney for the county than to keep doing what we're doing? County Manager Miller said so I'm really glad you asked that. So one of the things that we've done is, and this was before my time, the county decided to contract out a house for legal counsel payments for the foreclosure process. There's basically two methods that you can use for foreclosure. One of those two methods you can use in-house people to do it. When you use your in-house people to do it, you cannot be reimbursed for the expenses incurred when you're doing those foreclosures. The second one is you hire an outside consultant

to do it. The outside consultant handles the foreclosures, and they can be reimbursed for that. We would not continue to see the revenues through foreclosures, if we used an internal candidate, but we would still have many of the same expenses that we would if we did. Commissioner Dickerson said it's interesting you would say that because there was a conversation that was had, not in the open Board but we can have it now. Originally when that contract was awarded to the law firm that's got it, there was no bidding process. Nothing like that happened from talking to Mr. Carter, which passed away, who was on the Board at the time. Rockingham County put theirs out for bids, and they take part of the fees that they bring in from that. It's spent with the Sheriff's Department. They have extra revenues and paper items that the Sheriff's Department encourages. Why don't we look at something like that in Caswell County when that contract comes up again in 2022? It shouldn't be just a rubber stamp that somebody gets that. We should be taking care of the taxpayers in the county, putting that out for bids, and trying to get the best deal we can because that is legal avenue to receive that. Now in reference to what I was asking about the other issues, that's not the only legal expense we've paid for as a county. What about the other sources we farmed out? Could we have done it in-house with a full-time attorney? County Manager Miller said so I want to continue on with that line or that train of thinking. Currently we also have of course our county attorney that we use. We have a DSS attorney. I believe the county has tried to use the county attorney as a DSS attorney before. If what I'm being told is correct, and I have no reason to believe it's not, it was a nightmare. A DSS attorney is a very specialized, and the DSS attorney that we have now spent so many hours working on these DSS cases. A county attorney couldn't do the work of both a county attorney and a DSS attorney; not for what we deal with in Caswell. That's my opinion. Would you agree Mr. Jefferies? Commissioner Jefferies said well yes. The DSS attorney only received 34% of his salary from the county and the state pays the rest of it. County Manager Miller said we also use Sans Anderson, who is our bond council. That's a very specialized type of attorney too. They have to issue opinions on things, and your county attorney can't do that. You have to be listed in a special book, have to have special training, and have to be separate from part of a county to be able to issue those kind of opinions. So a bond council cannot do the same kind of work as a county attorney. Well a county attorney cannot do the same kind of work as a bond council. Even if we had an internal county attorney that we used full-time and paid them a full-time salary, we would still have to go outside of the county to retain bonds council. That's by state statute. So we've also used Womble Bond and Dickinson when we were sued for redistricting. So when we used that council that was a torque claim i.e. somebody sued us and we had to defend ourselves. When we have torque claims many times those torque claims are not defended by the county attorney because we pay insurance to provide relief from those kind of torque claims. They're defended by the NCACC risk pool, and the attorneys they hire. So they do a lot of work with Womble Bond and Dickinson and because of that we were reimbursed for those county costs. If we had used our county attorney to represent us in that litigation, we would have not been reimbursed for those cost. Commissioner Dickerson said I was aware of that from a prior

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conversation with you. County Manager Miller said so we also use Sanford Holshouser and the Borough's law firm. We've used both of those in the Watershed Review Board. First of all, we used Sanford Holshouser until they determined that they had a conflict of interest with their work on the Watershed Review Board. So they had to bow out of that, and that's when we started using the Borough Law Firm. So there's an inherent conflict of interest with this. The county attorney is hired by the Board of Commissioners to represent the Board of Commissioners and county staff. So during the Watershed Appeals Board, the county attorney was representing the Planning Director as well as the county against claims that we inadvertently or wrongfully issued watershed appeals permits. So the county attorney cannot both advise the person who issued the permit and advise the Watershed Appeals Board, the board that's going to determine if or not we inadvertently issued that permit wrongfully or an error. So that there's an inherent conflict of interest. That would be like a judge also representing the defendant. Basically is what we get to. So in each case if not statutory limitations, there's concrete reasons that we've used them. We've used one other one. Fox Rothschild we used for invested rights. You'll all remember when we were talking about vested rights, I gave you my opinion. The county attorney gave the Board his opinion, and the Board chose to engage Fox Rothschild to issue another opinion, which was basically the same opinion that I and the county attorney had given. The Board wanted it from an outside independent agency or person. They wanted a different legal appeal or another legal opinion. So in each case there's reasons why we used the attorneys we used. We would have had to use those attorneys whether or not we had a full-time county attorney or not. We would have still had to look for outside help. Commissioner Dickerson said thorough explanation thank you. Chairman McVey said all right we need some yeses or noes on this retainer. Commissioners Owen, Massengill, Oestreicher, and McVey voted yes, and Commissioner Dickerson voted no. Chairman McVey asked Commissioner Jefferies what was his vote on putting the county attorney on retainer. Commissioner Jefferies said I have been thinking about that quite a bit. Years ago we had a county attorney right here in the county that represented this Board. It was about \$600 a month. We talk about outside attorneys, and they don't pay no taxes here. I think it's something we need to think about. Maybe we need an attorney here in the county. We had an attorney that didn't stay long, and after that we got Ferrell's father. His father did not take on foreclosures. He didn't take on nothing but this Board and the county. Now Ferrell takes on more than his father did. His father made it plain to us what he wasn't going to do when we hired him. We did pretty good with him, but now we pay Ferrell every time he gets another lawyer. If he goes with him, we got to pay him too. If we have a lawyer here, they would pay taxes here. I don't know if anyone would take it. We wouldn't pay mileage fees because they would be here. So we will put the county attorney on retainer.

Commissioner Owen asked if the Board was going back to the capital outlay. They decided on the personnel, but not the capital outlay. Chairman McVey said we decided on information technology. We said yes. Commissioner Dickerson said you did one salary. Commissioner Owen said we went over them, but am I wrong. We said we'd go over them and go back to them to say

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yeah or nay. Commissioner Massengill said my only question, and I've expressed this with Mr. Miller, is the AG Building security doors, but he says they've gone over it. It's the best way. County Manager Miller said Commissioners if there's anything in any of the requests for capital that you'd like me to try to explain, I'm happy to talk through it with you. Commissioner Oestreicher said okay with the package. Commissioner Owen said I do want to go back to the security doors for just a moment. For instance when you turn right and go down the hallway, are they going to put doors there right before you get into those offices? Where are they talking about locating these interior doors? County Manager Miller said one set of the interior doors, if you walk in to the entrance at the bottom, there'll be a set of doors where the wooden swinging doors are to Farm Services. Now those wooden doors will go, and the doors will be there. There may also be another petition across the hall that separates the kitchen area as well. Upstairs it will be at the end of the hall. It will be in both Soil and Water and Cooperative Extension so they would both have the ability to buzz people in. Commissioner Owen said they would both be covered by that one door there, and the County Manager said yes. So Commissioners what we'll be able to do from the information you've given us this evening is we'll be able to go through the budget and provide you with a budget ordinance. You'll vote on the budget ordinance at your next meeting. Commissioner Massengill said which is, and the Board replied Wednesday morning at 8 o'clock. Commissioner Dickerson said we were about to vote on the capital outlay items. Chairman McVey said he will go down the list. Information technology: Consensus yes except Dickerson. Maintenance: Consensus yes except Dickerson. Commissioner Massengill said I still have an issue with the security doors, but I'm a yes. Sheriff's Office: Consensus yes except Dickerson. Commissioner Dickerson said I'm not a flat-out no, but I just think it ought to be pushed to next year when we have more idea of what the economy is going to be. So I'll vote no. Communications: Consensus yes except Dickerson. EMS furniture: Commissioner Owen said this was the beds. The County Manager said the beds and all and furniture for the bedroom for the employees. Yeah we added a new shift. Consensus yes except Dickerson. Farmer Lake the boat canopy: Consensus yes except Dickerson. Health Department Portico: Consensus yes except Dickerson. Emergency telephone service: County Manager Miller said Commissioners, here again that's state money. That's not a county funded. CATS Transportation is grant and enterprise money. Commissioner Dickerson said long as there is no cost, I'm all for it.

County Manager Miller said Commissioners, I really appreciate your work today. I can tell you a lot of work into this. Myself and the Finance Department appreciates the work that you have put into it. We appreciate you working with us, and we'll have you a budget ordinance at eight o'clock in the morning on the 29th for approval at CoSquare. Commissioner Massengill said we appreciate the Finance Office. Those girls have done a good job under highly unusual circumstances. County Manager Miller said they have, and I can't speak highly enough of Jennifer Hammack or Melissa Miller. While we're giving credit and praise where credit and praise is due, I'd also like to thank Melissa Williams and Aisha Gwynn. They've done a tremendous job over the last couple weeks with the things that I've tasked them with to allow us

the time to do this. They've participated in the budget process as well. So I think you're seeing a good group of folks come together and do good things for the county. Chairman McVey said anything else. If not, we will meet Wednesday morning at eight o'clock. I'm assuming we're going to be here or at the CoSquare. County Manager Miller said CoSquare. The library has programming, and that's the reason we cannot meet here.

RECESS / ADJOURNMENT:

The Chairman recessed the budget meeting until June 29, 2022 at 8 am at CoSquare.

Carla R. Smith
Clerk to the Board

Rick McVey
Chairman