MINUTES – NOVEMBER 5, 2018

The Caswell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at the Caswell County Historic Courthouse in Yanceyville, North Carolina at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, November 5, 2018. Members present: Nathaniel Hall, Chairman, Rick McVey, Vice-Chairman, Jeremiah Jefferies, David Owen and Kenneth D. Travis. Absent: Sterling Carter and William E. Carter. Also present: Bryan Miller, County Manager and Brian Ferrell, County Attorney. Paula P. Seamster, Clerk to the Board, recorded the minutes.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Chairman Hall opened the meeting with a moment of Silent Prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board of Commissioners and all the guests in the audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Owen stated that he would like to add an item to the agenda, entitled Ethics Concerns. Chairman Hall responded that this item would come after recognitions.

Commissioner Travis moved, seconded by Commissioner McVey to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Travis to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

The following item was included on the Consent Agenda:

A. Approval of Minutes of October 15, 2018 Special Meeting

B. Approval of Minutes of October 15, 2018 Regular Meeting

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Hall opened the floor to Public Comments.

Mr. John Claggett came before the Board and made the following statement:

“Good morning, my name is John Claggett and I reside at 108 Jaye Lane, Providence, NC. I would like my public statement recorded verbatim. On your agenda this morning is Emergency Operations Plans. The county has such a plan that was last updated almost 10 years ago. The basic plan excluding the various annexes states:

* The purpose of the plan
* Lists services or agencies which may have expanded duties during disasters which are provided by the county and/or volunteer organizations within the county.
* Lists municipal services such as water, law enforcement, sanitation, sewer, fire protection and public works.
* Lists major traffic arteries/railroad within the county. The 2200’ airstrip in Yanceyville, and the closest commercial airport.
* Outlines a Concept of Operations to include Phases of Comprehensive Emergency Management.

The document goes on and on so in the interest of time I won’t. I’m in hopes that each and every one of you will take the time to read it. It appears to me to be a well written document. I believe it is sufficient in appearance to cover the county’s responsibility outlined per the North Carolina Emergency Management Act, in accordance with NCGS 166A-19.1, 19.3, and 19.15 which states the responsibility of the county government to organize and plan for the protection of life and property from the effects of hazardous events. Organizing and planning is one thing, implementing is yet another. Approximately 5 hours prior to us experiencing tropical storm Michael the county knew of the severity of the coming storm. You knew of the storms projected path and the speed in which it was approaching. At such time our fire service set up two shelters. This was due to lessons learned from Hurricane Fran. The problem wasn’t with those that executed their pre-planned response. The problem was that the citizens didn’t know about the who, what, where, why, and when. A five hour heads up could’ve given the citizens a chance to prepare for, rather than be surprised by, the storm. It’s not the National Weather Service’s responsibility to micro-manage Caswell County Emergency Services. We’re not getting what we pay for. I and people just like me have spent most of their working life operating under the concept that you perform like you train. If you don’t believe me ask our fire marshal with respect to the training and performance association with the recent ISO assessment. It’s all about communicating, coordinating, and executing. It isn’t about an out dated well written document when there’s a known threat 5 hours away, inbound. When our elected officials are inquiring on Facebook as to how many are still without power rather then consulting the Emergency Management Director, something’s seriously wrong. When there are two separate Public Information Officers identified within the county, something’s seriously confusing. When traffic signals aren’t operating properly and traffic is chaotic and law enforcement is nowhere to be found, something’s wrong. Let me tell you why it’s confusing and wrong, poor execution of a well written document. You performed like you trained. The substandard internet capabilities, the spotty cellphone service that this county is historically known for coupled with a major power outage is bad enough. To not have had the opportunity to even attempt to prepare because the county didn’t make its citizenry aware could be considered criminal. What happens next time? Where’s your stewardship?”

Chairman Hall asked if there was anyone else that would like to speak during Public Comments. With no further comments Public Comments was closed.

RECOGNITIONS

Chairman Hall stated that he had two things. The first was a letter from the North Carolina Association of County Clerks addressed to the Caswell County Board of Commissioners. “On behalf of the North Carolina Association of County Clerks please accept warmest thanks to you and the Caswell County Board of Commissioners for allowing your county clerk, Paula Seamster, to host the Piedmont Regional Clerks Academy in Yanceyville on September 28, 2018. Paula and those assisting her did an outstanding job coordinating the event and ensuring that each attendee had a meaningful and educational experience, they certainly made their fellow clerks feel welcome by extending Caswell County hospitality. Thank you again. Sincerely, Laura M. Williams.” And Paula, our thanks to you.”

Chairman Hall stated “I want to give my personal thanks to the Board of Commissioners for their support over the years as the delegate to the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments. Because of your support and they say some of my service I was awarded a regional award at the 50th Anniversary. It’s the Grady Hunter Regional Excellence Award and that was presented to me at the Regional 50th Anniversary of the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments. Again I accept this award.” Commissioner Owen responded “And Mr. Chairman let me apologize because I forgot about that and I was there. I just personally want to thank you for your work on the regional level and for having a voice for Caswell County. So accept my apology and thanks.” Chairman Hall stated “Thank you.”

ETHICS CONCERNS

Commissioner Owen stated “Thank you Mr. Chairman and fellow Board members, as elected officials we know that our behavior and actions reflect on this Board, on the citizenry of Caswell County as well as Caswell County in regional and other areas. This is never an easy thing for me to try to do but I think it’s important that this Board at times makes a statement concerning ethical behavior or legal behavior of a commissioner. As we know, I hope all of us are aware that we had a commissioner who violated an election law and that is being dealt with but I believe it is important that this Board when those kinds of things happen take an official stance of disapproval of such behavior from any commissioner and I just simply want to bring that up to you today because what I will do is at our next meeting I would like to present a resolution of censor against Commissioner Sterling Carter for this Board to consider pursuing. Thank you.”

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Chairman Hall stated that during the last two hurricanes he noticed some weaknesses in the county’s Emergency Operations Plan. He added that the plan was not printed and available to everyone. Chairman Hall stated that he signed two State of Emergency declarations and the Vice Chairman signed one but the Board did not know what was in the this plan. He added that the departments that were involved seemed aware of their responsibilities but here were no identifiable triggers to start things and no plans of follow up. Chairman Hall stated that he had expressed his concerns about the shelters and how to identify them and that communications countywide is a major problem. He added that the county was not able to adequately distribute emergency supplies and a lot of it had to do with communication as well as planning. Chairman Hall proposed to the Board that it authorize, request or direct the county manager to immediately put together a task force to review and revise the County’s Emergency Operations Plan.

Commissioner Owen stated that he has read through most of the document and he agrees with what was said earlier about the document, the documents is well written and well prepared but the execution of the document is where it needs improving. He added that the biggest complaint that he received was that the citizens did not know the centers were open. Commissioner Owen stated that he had been in conversation with the Emergency Services Director about using the Code Red Alert System to get this information out to the public. He added that his concern with the task force is the amount of time needed to revise the document when it could be handled by a professional who knows about emergency management. Commissioner Owen stated that he knows that emergency money will be coming to the county and these funds could be used to review and revise the plan.

Commissioner Jefferies stated that the Board did not need to look at the cost but to look at saving lives.

Commissioner Travis stated that the information about the shelters should be knowledge available prior to a disaster. He liked the idea of getting outside help.

Chairman Hall stated that when the hurricane hit he had not had time to review the document. He added that whatever is done the citizens should know what they need to do and communications should be made in advance. He did not think a consultant was needed for this. Chairman Hall stated that an alternate means of communications needs to be established ahead of time.

Commissioner Owen stated that he would agree with Chairman Hall if the document will only be review but if it is going to be rewritten a consultant from Emergency Management should be used.

Mr. Miller stated that even if the county hired a consultant it would still require a lot of time from staff to work on this document. He added that himself, the Emergency Management Director, Health Director, DSS Director have identified several things to improve the services such as shelters. Mr. Miller stated that he has a listing of things that were implemented during the storm and he stands behind what he said earlier that there are a lot of things that were done right. He thanked the Emergency Management for what they had to work with.

Chairman Hall stated that one of his concerns is that the shelters are opened in a timely manner. He added that he heard that there were pallets of ice left in the parking lot to melt.

Commissioner McVey stated that the Board needed to determine if there needs to be a rewrite or just an update because his decision would be based on this information.

Commissioner Owen agreed. He added that his suggestion would be to go ahead and direct the county manager to work on the things that have been identified because winter time is coming and shelters may be needed. He added that later the Board could decide to address the whole plan later.

Chairman Hall stated that this would work for him. Commissioner Travis agreed.

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Travis to direct the county manger to form a task force to address the immediate needs in the Emergency Operations Plan. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Hall asked the county manager if he understood this. Mr. Miller responded yes.

SENIOR TAR HEEL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Ms. Sylvia Banks said good morning to the Commissioners, County Manager and other County Officers. She stated that she currently serves as a delegate as well as the Sergeant at Arms and Marilyn Corbett serves as the alternate and working together they represent Caswell County at the state level. Ms. Banks stated that the Senior Tar Hell Legislative is a legislative body created by the North Carolina General Assembly 25 years ago. She added that their role is to report and make recommendations to the North Carolina General Assembly. Ms. Banks stated that each of the 100 counties in the state is entitled to representation. She stated that the Senior Tar Heel Legislative promotes citizen involvement and advocacy concerning aging issues before the North Carolina General Assembly as well as access to legislative needs for older adults by convening a forum modeled after the North Carolina General Assembly. Ms. Banks informed the Board that in their packets there is a list of priorities for the 2019 Legislative Agenda and they are: Increase Funding for the Home and Community Care Block Grant, Maintain and Increase Funding for Senior Centers, Increase Funding for Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty), Strengthen and Fund North Carolina’s Adult Protective Services Program (APS), and Staff-to-Patient Ratios in Nursing Homes.

CASWELL COUNTY ADULT ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

Ms. Sylvia Banks stated that the Caswell County Adult Advisory Council was formerly known as the Planning Committee. She added that Board had allowed the restructure of two committees that were working separately to serve citizens in Caswell County and now the two committees now work collectively. Ms. Banks stated that the council celebrated one year this past June. She added that the council continues to meet with the support of local community partners such as the Board of Commissioners, the Sheriff’s Department, Health Department, CATS, Caswell Family Medical Center, State Employees Credit Union, VFW Post 7316, Alzheimer’s Association, DSS, Caswell Senior Center, Brian Center, Mayor of Yanceyville, Primary Home Health, Caswell Health Collaborative, Cedar Grove Association, Caswell Chamber of Commerce, Caswell Parish, Fidelity, Caswell House as well as other partners in Caswell County. She added that the goal of the council is to meet in different areas of the county so everyone will have an input in this council. Ms. Banks thanked the Piedmont Triad Regional Council Area Agency on Aging for their support. She added that the PTRC made it possible to receive the latest booklet on An Overview of the Aging Population & Individuals with Disabilities in which all the Commissioners should have received. She thanked Commissioner Hall for his work with the Regional Council to make sure Caswell County is represented at the regional level. Ms. Banks stated that the next meeting for the Adult Advisory Council will be November 28th at 9:30 a.m. at the Senior Center and the next session for the Senior Tar Heel Legislation will be March 12th and 13th at the North Carolina Rural Center in Raleigh.

Commissioner Owen commended Ms. Banks for her work for the citizens of Caswell County especially the seniors. He also requested that when the community meetings are to be held that the Board is notified so it can attend to show support for what is being done. Ms. Bank responded that she would do this.

Chairman Hall thanked Adrienne Calhoun for being at the meeting representing the Piedmont Triad Regional Council.

CASWELL COUNTY STATE OF THE COUNTY HEALTH REPORT FOR 2017

Ms. Marcy Williams that the County Health Report for 2017 was submitted to the State in the spring. She added a community health assessment has to be done every 4 years so that health concerns can be identified in the report. Ms. Williams stated that this report can be found on the Health Department’s website as well as at the Gunn Memorial Public Library. Included in the report is Socioeconomic and Demographic information which is an update from the Community Health Assessment but not much has changed. She added that the county population is older, more rural, lower income, less diverse but also less white than the state, fewer people in the labor force which is probably a result of the county’s older population being retired. Ms. Williams stated that one good thing is that the county has a lower crime rate than the state. She added the report also includes the Major Mortality and Morbidity Information which says the leading death for the county is cancer, heart disease, lung disease, stroke, Alzheimer’s disease, unintentional injuries, diabetes, and motor vehicle injuries is one of the top 10 causes for death but it is not for the state. Ms. Williams stated that Trends in Mortality Rates is hard to do in the county because of the small population so a five year period is used for this. She added that Environmental Health Information is also included in this report as well as Progress on Priority Health Concerns. She added that the three priorities areas of the health assessment are obesity, mental health and substance use. Ms. Williams stated with the obesity the health department works with the Wellness Program as well as with the Local Foods Council and Farmers Markets. Ms. Williams stated that the mental health and substance use have been combined and there is a coalition that meets every several months and if anyone would like to be a part of that they can contact the Health Department to find out when the next meeting will be. She added that the county has added new initiatives such as the Diabetes Program at the Health Department, the Health Department participates in Reach Out and Read which provides books to children under 5 and another concern is opioids prevention. Ms. Williams stated that there is not a lot of data on the opioid epidemic but they do have data on newborns and Caswell’s data is higher than the region which is Caswell, Alamance, Orange, Rockingham, Randolph, Chatham Person, and Durham Counties and the rate is also higher than the State.

Commissioner Owen stated that he noticed in the Water Quality Program that the most common thing found is iron and magnesium in the water samples and he wanted to know if this was due to the metal pipes in the houses. Ms. Williams responded that she is not sure but she could look into that more. Commissioner Owen added that 51% did not meet the standard. Ms. Williams responded that she would find out more on that information.

RECESS

The Board took a brief recess.

LIBRARY EXPANSION PRESENTATION

Ms. Rhonda Griffin, Library Director, stated that she was before the Board this morning to give an update on the library expansion project. She showed a presentation on the process so far. Ms. Griffin stated that the proposed completion date is mid to late March and hope to have a grand re-opening the 1st of May. She added that the library will need to be closed a couple of weeks to move the items from the temporary library to the permanent library. Ms. Griffin went over the list of grants that were received to make this library expansion possible. The next item Ms. Griffin wanted to speak to the Board about was the Butterfly Garden. She stated that the butterfly garden was larger before the expansion so she proposed to move the butterfly garden to the back of the building to provide more space and sunlight as well as a vegetable garden. Ms. Griffin stated that the Friends of the Library are forming a committee to maintain the butterfly garden. She asked the Board for permission to designate the area in the back of the building for the Butterfly Garden.

Commissioner Owen asked if this required a vote form the Board. Mr. Miller responded that a vote from the Board would help with the overall architectural layout of the facility and it may be required by the architect.

Ms. Griffin stated that the Friends of the Library are seeking donations for the butterfly garden.

Commissioner Travis asked how much room is needed for the butterfly garden. Ms. Griffin responded that the butterfly garden now is 450 square feet.

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Travis to approve the relocation of the Butterfly Garden as recommended by the Library Director. The motion carried unanimously.

S&ME LANDFILL EVALUTATION: STATE RECONCILIATION

Chairman Hall stated that this item would be moved to another meeting since Mr. Edmund Henriques is not present.

2019 LEGISLATIVE GOALS VOTING DELEGATE DESIGNATION

Commissioner Travis moved, seconded by Commissioner McVey to appoint Commissioner David Owen to serve as the voting delegate for Caswell County at the 2019 Legislative Goals Conference in January. The motion carried unanimously.

SURPLUS OF PROPERTY AT THE DRUG STORE

Mr. Miller stated that he had provided a list of items as well as pictures of the items to the Board. Some of the items the departments will be able to use but the remaining items he would like to request to be put in the county auction or to be disposed of.

Chairman Hall stated that he feels it is appropriate to move forward with a vote to surplus this property.

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner McVey to surplus the property at the Drug Store. The motion carried unanimously.

ARCHITECT AND ENGINEERING RECOMMENDATION – PROJECT SEED

Mr. Miller stated that the County received 3 proposals back on the RFQ that was sent out for Project Seed. He added that he and the economic developer got together and went through the proposals, ranked and scored them. The recommendation is to proceed with Ramsey Burgin Smith Architects, Inc.

Commissioner McVey moved, seconded by Commissioner Owen to proceed with Ramsey Burgin Smith Architects, Inc. The motion carried unanimously.

COUNTY MANAGER’S UPDATES

Milton/Semora Detour Route

Mr. Miller stated the first update is concerning the detour of Highway 58 going through Milton and Semora. He added the detour was caused by the damage to both the eastbound and westbound bridge on Highway 58 and the initial estimate was about 9 weeks for repair. Mr. Miller stated that this route receives a lot of commercial traffic such as delivery trucks, etc. He added that the North Carolina DOT, North Carolina Highway Patrol and Caswell County Sheriff’s Office was contacted on several occasions about this situation and DOT has installed high visibility signs as well as lighted message boards where most of the problems were occurring. Mr. Miller added that a trucking tour is being looking at to divert this traffic out of Milton and Semora. He added that the Sheriff’s Department has placed deputies in this area to help with the situation. The county has requested that NC DOT work with the Virginia Department of Transportation to expedite the repairs and traffic load and VDOT has agreed to fix the least damaged part of the bridge on Highway 58 first to allow one lane of traffic on Highway 58.

Commissioner Jefferies asked if deputies could be placed in Milton and Semora for the voting on November 6th if possible.

Health Collaborative 2018 THRIVE! Challenge

Mr. Miller congratulated the Caswell County Board of Commissioners and the Wellness Committee for their recent THRIVE! Challenge award. He added the Wellness Committee and Board of Commissioners received two awards: one for program and the other for policy. Mr. Miller stated that the THRIVE awards are given to those organizations that are going above and beyond to make healthy choices in places that we live, work and play. He stated that FY 2017-2018 was the first year the wellness program was implemented and it will allow for the county to obtain future data in order for the program to move forward. Statistics were given on the programs that were held during this time period. Mr. Miller stated that even though it was submitted under the Program category the selection committee decided to award the county in the Policy category. He stated kudos to the Board of Commissioners for allowing this program to take place and kudos to the Wellness Committee for doing such good work that they were recognized by the Health Collaborative and received the THRIVE! Award.

ANNOUNCMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

 A. Employee Appreciation Luncheon – Wednesday, December 5,

 2018 @ 12:00 – 3:00 p.m. – Civic Center

CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Owen moved, seconded by Commissioner Travis to go into Closed Session to consider the compensation, terms of appointment and performance of an individual public officer (NGS 143-318.11(a)(6)) and to prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential (NCGS143-318.11(a)(1)). The motion carried unanimously.

REGULAR SESSION

Commissioner Travis moved, seconded by Commissioner Owen to resume the regular meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Miller stated that as a planning tool and a way to move the Emergency Response Systems forward with the announced retirement of the County’s 911 Communications Director he would like to see this position become Communications Director/Assistant Fire Marshal for several reasons. He added that the county fire marshal is appointed by the County Commissioners and there is no clear path for that now and the county’s fire marshal is the only unpaid fire marshal in the state so the county has to start planning for this position due to the age of the current fire marshal. Mr. Miller stated the county needed to establish a succession plan.

Commissioner Travis stated that the Communications director’s position must not be a full time job if the fire marshal responsibilities are going to be added to it. Mr. Miller responded that this is not true and the position will be an assistant to the fire marshal.

Commissioner McVey stated that gives an opportunity to have someone trained in case something was to happen to the fire marshal. Mr. Miller agreed that this would create a layer of support and the appointment of the fire marshal is given by the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Travis stated the Solid Waste Director’s position is the same way because the director out there is retiring as well. Commissioner McVey responded that if the county starts to do this it will give the county a little bit of preparation to have someone to step in when there needs to be. Commissioner Travis stated that he, Mr. Jefferies and Mr. Hall were on the Board when Faye Mize stated that she was going to retire and the county went through a mess down there because it was not taken seriously. Chairman Hall responded that it was a mess. He added that some things could be handled by changing job descriptions and by cross training as the county manager is speaking of here. He added that the most critical position will be that of the finance director because learning local government finance is very difficult. Mr. Miller stated the position would be a Deputy Finance Director position. Chairman Hall stated that he was not concerned about the title of the position as he is having someone to fill the position because the county does not have a single trained accountant on payroll.

Commissioner Travis asked if the finance director is going to retire at the end of this year or work the entire next year. Mr. Miller responded that if there is someone to train the finance director will work next year. He added that Finance has an unfilled position now and the minimum salary is $26,546.66 and a deputy finance director position would come in at a Grade 23 which would be $39,221.50 which is about $13,000 between the two salaries so if the Board agrees this position could be created with about $13,000. Commissioner Travis stated that his opinion is the county needs a certain date on when the finance director is going to retire and then to advertise for the job and hire someone to be trained as soon as possible. Mr. Miller responded that the county will advertise for the position.

Chairman Hall stated that each position needs to be handled separately.

Commissioner McVey moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to add Assistant Fire Marshal to the Communications Director’s position at the same salary range.

Commissioner Travis asked what the salary range is. Mr. Miller responded the salary range is $45,403.79 to $68,105.69.

Upon a vote of the motion, the motion carried by a vote of four to one with Commissioner Travis voting no.

Chairman Hall stated that the next position is for Finance, Deputy Finance Director.

Commissioner Jefferies moved, seconded by Commissioner McVey to add the position of Deputy Finance Director immediately.

Commissioner Owen asked for clarification on the motion because his understanding is the position that is open to fill this position and to reclassify this position. Mr. Miller responded that it is a reclassification of the position from Accounting Technician I, Grade 15, to Deputy Finance Director, Grade 23, and there is a $13,000 difference in the two positions.

Upon a vote of the motion and adding a reclassification from a Grade 15 to a Grade 23, the motion carried by a vote of four to one with Commissioner Travis voting no.

Chairman Hall stated the next position is the Elections Director.

Commissioner Travis asked if the person had accepted the position. Mr. Miller responded that he has contingent on receiving the same salary he is making now.

Chairman Hall stated that the Board of Elections is a separate board and he thought the Board of Elections should meet with the Board of Commissioners on this position. He added that he thinks the Board of Elections wants to take this step and why the Board of Commissioners should go along with it and this is not negative but there needs to be a discussion between the two boards. Chairman Hall stated that he likes the fact of promoting within and he encourages that. Mr. Miller responded that the Board of Elections has a representative waiting to talk to this Board. Commissioner Travis stated that the Board of Elections should have been here this morning to discuss this.

Mr. Miller stated that this needs to be done quickly because the State Board is requiring Caswell County to have a person in that seat for training December 1st and this person has to be hired and go through the process of being hired by the State Board of Elections.

Chairman Hall asked who is responsible for hiring this person. Mr. Miller responded that the Board of Elections is responsible. Chairman Hall stated that is too much to consider here and there needs to be a discussion with the Board of Elections.

Mr. Miller asked when the Board would like to meet with the Board of Elections. Commissioner Owen responded as soon as possible. Commissioner Jefferies responded Thursday or Friday. Chairman Hall responded that it is the desire of the Board to meet with the Board of Elections and they can let the Board know when they can meet. Commissioner Travis stated that he know that the next day would not be good because it is Election Day. Commissioner Jefferies stated that Wednesday may be a bad day as well because of the election.

Chairman Hall stated that there was a fourth position that needed to be discussed. Commissioner Travis responded that it is the Landfill position. Mr. Miller responded that he was just informing the Board that the director will be retiring. Commissioner Travis stated so the county manager is just informing the Board and will be advertising the position. Mr. Miller responded that he was just informing the Board that there is a lot going on and a lot of people leaving.

ADJOURNMENT

At 11:07 a.m. Commissioner Travis moved, seconded by Commissioner Owen to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

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Paula P. Seamster Nathaniel Hall

Clerk to the Board Chairman

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