

MINUTES  
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
OF EDGEcombe COUNTY  
SEPTEMBER 6, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M.  
IN THE JONATHAN FELTON COMMISSIONERS ROOM  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING  
TARBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

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1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIRMAN LEONARD WIGGINS AT 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Leonard Wiggins, Chairman, Rev. E. Wayne Hines, Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Evelyn Powell, Mr. William Wooten, Mr. Ralph Webb and Mrs. Viola Harris.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Donald Boswell.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Eric Evans, County Manager, Mrs. Natalie Bess, Deputy County Manager, Mr. Michael Peters, County Attorney and Ms. Frangie Mungo, Clerk to the Board.

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS.

Safety instructions provided by Mrs. Bess.

3. PRAYER.

Prayer provided by Rev. Hines.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL.

Rev. Hines moved to approve the minutes of the August 1, 2022 meeting as presented. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

5. SCHEDULED APPOINTMENT:

- A. Michelle Etheridge, Health Director, presented COVID-19 update.
- As of August 30, 2022 15,879 cases reported in Edgecombe County.
  - To date 160 deaths.
  - Current CDC guidelines:
    - ✓ Recommending that instead of quarantining if you were exposed to COVID-19, you wear a high-quality mask for 10 days and get tested on day 5.
    - ✓ Reiterating that regardless of vaccination status, you should isolate from others when you have COVID-19.
    - ✓ Recommending that if you test positive for COVID-19, you stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home.
- B. Ted Cole, Davenport and Company, presented recommendation for financing of Sheriff's vehicles.  
Mr. Cole presented:
- Summary of bids received.
  - Summary of proposals.
  - Recommendations and next steps.
  - Award to Truist Financial Corporation.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the Purchase Contract to Truist Financial Corporation as presented. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

C. Representative from Altus Group presented request to waive tax penalty.

After the representative presented her request Mrs. Tarasa Lewis answered questions and recommended that the request be denied.

Mr. Wooten moved to accept the recommendation of staff as presented. Rev.

Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

6. PUBLIC PETITIONS.

Evelyn Bulluck, 2724 Gary Road, Rocky Mount, stated that most of her life she resided in Edgemombe County and then moved to Nash County eight years ago. She stated that she stood before the Board, not to ask for a favor or not to favor a demerger. She stood to ask a few questions and did not expect an answer, but hoped that the Board, in your deliberations, these questions will come back to their minds. 1) If there should be a demerger where would the approximately 1700 students be schooled. 2) Does Edgemombe County Schools presently have space for those 1700 students. How will the high school students be dealt with. Will those who will be attending our high schools in Nash County Public Schools, be grandfathered to graduate with their cohorts or will they be moved. 3) She is a member of the Nash County Board of Education and did not stand here tonight as a member of that board. She stood here tonight for all of the children in this area, Nash and Edgemombe County, because her desire was for every student to receive a sound, basic education. She stated that she has been on the Board all these years and have also been troubled that in years before, students were riding the bus one to two hours daily to get to and from school and she wanted to know how will they lessen that time so that the 1700 students, who will be coming from Rocky Mount Edgemombe County not have to ride a school bus that long every day.

Nehemiah Smith, Jr., 620 E. Virginia Street, Rocky Mount, stated that he recently returned from a disaster relief mission in Eastern Kentucky to help victims with flooding. He had been to Kentucky before, but never to this part of the state. He still wanted to do some research on Kentucky and what it is known for. Kentucky is known for coal, bourbon whiskey, college basketball, Kentucky fried chicken, bluegrass and horse racing. At the top of most of the list is horse racing. Specifically, the Kentucky Derby. In its 147-year history of racing Thoroughbreds No one has entered a jackass to run in the Kentucky Derby, because jackasses are not prepared, nor would they qualify to race. For some time now, the specter of school split has loomed over Edgemombe and Nash counties. It initially rose in the lie of demerger as a hot button issue in the community and has garnered support and disdain. He stated that he has been and is against such a move at this time. It will be detrimental to our children and to the County as a whole. It's about the numbers. Edgemombe County Public Schools ranks among the five worst counties in the State for the rate of failing schools, 71.4%, but should we add Baskerville, Parker, Johnson and Fairview it goes up to 77.8%. We don't want any percentage of failure for our children. But instead of climbing out of a hole, you are proposing that we dig ourselves a deeper one should you decide to vote to change the boundaries of the existing system at this time. He stated that he is not saying that it doesn't need to happen. Just not right now. His stated that the novel idea would be to demand that are legislative delegation revise the current legislation to read that Edgemombe County is only responsible for capital outlay projects that are within the city limits. Improve on what already exist. Concentrate on getting County affairs in order, including supporting our share and getting more resources to the existing school system. Then consider how we can pull in Edgemombe County school residents into the existing school system. That's a Thoroughbred decision. But to say that we can split the system, add more low performing schools to an already low performing system, doing imaginary money to fund the venture, work from wish lists rather than plans and have success for our students and the County is equivalent to running a jackass in the Kentucky Derby. He stated that one thing that he has found out in his years of dealing with people and following the masses is a lot of times in the midst of following the masses the "m" falls off. He hoped that all of the commissioners would vote for the best interest of the students and for the residents of Edgemombe County.

Bronson Williams, stated that he was nervous and trembling waiting to see how the what the vote will be tonight. He stated that he hoped that the Board is not going to

vote to take control of four schools in Rocky Mount. Something seems a little strange that we are wanting to drive a wedge in the heart of Rocky Mount, North Carolina. A city that is right now working to build it's downtown, trying to bring unity between Nash and Edgecombe County. Yet, it seems to be the priority of this commission to want to "take our children back." He stated that he spoke in July and was very happy with the vote in July. He stated that he sometimes come to meetings and the vote is not what he would want to happen, but at the end of that we must live with the decisions in which we make. He stated that being a student, a product of Nash Rocky Mount Schools, walking the halls of D.S. Johnson, Edwards Middle School and graduate as a Rocky Mount Senior High Gryphon, he remembers his days back at D.S. Johnson. There was a police officer that came to the school and he would talk about drugs. He was a DARE officer and showed us all of the different types of narcotics that existed and what affects they could have. But beyond the affects of the drug he talked about peer pressure. Many of us in life find our self in peer pressure with our counterparts, with our community people telling us about this, about that, and when we find ourselves succumbing to peer pressure ultimately, we are getting addicted on a substance that means us harm. He stated that he hoped that we will not get addicted to failure. He believes in Edgecombe County, like many my friends that graduated from here wanted to move away from here. Wanted to go here, go there and he decided to stay right here in Rocky Mount, North Carolina in Edgecombe County. This is were his heart is, but he would hate for us to make a raspy decision. He stated that he keeps hearing the notion that the money follows the children and he talked to a superintendent today. All the money doesn't follow the children. We talked about low wealth monies and how the county must give expected contributions to education within the county to even to continue to receive low wealth funding. We need a deliberate plan for success. We have to have an educational plan that makes sense and it starts with common sense. It starts with you six tonight who are here and elected by members of this County to represent everyone's best interest. Not a special interest group, but these little children who often times can't speak for themselves. Who is counting on each and every one of you to make wise decisions for what their life's success will be. He stated that he could not find a logical reason as to why the decision to transfer students must happen now without a plan. As you think tonight, he hoped that we don't lean into peer pressure. Make wise decisions and be our own people.

Crystal Anderson, 316 Swift Road, Rocky Mount, was present to voice her opinion on the split with the hopes that the Board votes no or else delay their vote. At first she was all in agreement as it was her own personal opinion and the lack of resources. She was fed up with how the system was functioning and the lack of diversity mindset she experienced with her child while attending school. Her solution was to leave the system and take her child to a charter school because she knew he was not receiving what he needed. She stated that you would think that she would be sitting here saying yes, let's split, but, however, she is saying no, because she has that right and can make her own decision, but not every one can speak on their own. It will further split Rocky Mount as a whole. Edgecombe county is growing, but what we don't want to do is stifle the growth trends we are seeing now. We don't need to over burden the school systems, but allow Edgecombe County to continue to develop strategies while they grow so they are prepared to take on the additional weight. Work with Nash to see how we can improve upon what they are doing for our kids because there are many broken homes and families which leads to children that need more than just a teacher. They need a whole support system. She stated that she did not believe that Edgecombe is prepared at this moment to take on that burden. We cannot play politics at the expense of our kids. How will this impact our overall economic development of Edgecombe Rocky Mount? Will population shifts occur? Will the needs of the youth far out weigh the present budget? What will be the financial impact on the citizens overall? What can we do to improve the present system? Will our educations be willing to transition?

Raymond Privott, ECPS Chairman, stated that on behalf of his constituents and the members of his Board he would make the same statement and take the same position and stance. That is that we honor our moral obligation to educate all of the children within the Edgecombe County boundary in the Edgecombe County Public School System.

Richard Joyner stated that he makes his living working with youth and does not take the development of children lightly. He has had the privilege to work on the design team of the Edgecombe County School System, looking at how we are going to do the merger. It has been educational. He had the opportunity, along with T.J. Walker to represent Rocky Mount City Council on that design team. Our Mayor, our entire City Council has expressed the approval for the merger. We realize that there is a lot to be done, but we need to start and get it done. He stated that he is asking the Board to make the tough decision and he and the City Council of Rocky Mount are not walking away from them after they make their decision. We are going to be with you because these are all of our children and we are committed to being with you, our school board in Nash and Edgecombe County until we get the best system that will educate our children.

Otha Woodard, 505 Lincoln Road, Tarboro, stated that he came tonight as a citizen. One of the overriding things that concerned him is that we do have 1700 of our students under the administrative and guidance of another school system. We have a moral obligation and responsibility to educate our own children. He stated that if he was in the legislature and had the influence he would not give Edgecombe County a choice, because it's our responsibility to educate our children. We have to figure it out. He stated that he has confidence in you all, as County Commissioners, as well as the School Board, the State Education Board and the State of North Carolina to get this done. It is his understanding that we are the only district that does not educate our own children. Nash County went to the legislation to get the change that was made right now. What the school board is asking is for an opportunity to develop a plan. The plan cannot start until the County Commissioners give them permission to do that. He stated that the money does follow the student and he has faith in your School Board.

Curmilus Dancy, 127 Midway Lane, Tarboro (P O Box 1391, Pinetops) stated that wish he wished he had the video that he took when the Edgecombe County and Nash County Commissioners met. He is trying to figure out did anybody attend the meeting or have they looked at the videos, because they are all on his YouTube page. He stated that "you ought to educate yourself before you come to speak. I'm just trying to figure out what are these folks talking about. I have not heard anybody ask why we are at this point." He stated that he has not heard anybody say why we are at this point. It was Nash County that created this mess. Nash County Commissioners did not want Rocky Mount to keep paying the gap money. Why aren't people talking about Nash County. Is this same energy being taken to Nash County School Board. Robbie Davis was one of the main ones leading the way. This Senate Bill 382, you have no option if you don't pay the money you will automatically default. Low performance is nothing new. The problem comes if you don't do anything about it. He asked that you look at his videos to be educated. He asked the Board to make the best decision.

Shelly Willingham, State Representative, 916 Hill Street, Rocky Mount, NC. Stated that he is probably the oldest one in here that's been involved with the merger of the systems. He stated that he was one of the original plaintiffs that sued to have this happen and really believed that it was the best thing at that time and it worked. He provided the following history on how we got to this point: "Everybody that was in it support of merging the system during that time because of what happened. How it came about is we had the Rocky Mount School System, Edgecombe County School System and Nash County School system. As Rocky Mount grew by annexation it was customary during that time that when you annex a piece of land

in the school system, whether it is on the Edgecombe side or Nash side, would automatically release those students to go to the Rocky Mount school system. It got to a point where Nash County School Board decided that they were not going to release any more students to the RM city school system because, what we discovered, Nash county school system felt like it was losing too many students to RM and felt like they should have those students and this created a situation in Rocky Mount. Rocky Mount SS decided that there must be something done to alleviate this situation. One of the things they came up with, because at that time RM school system was predominately black so Nash County decided that we will keep all of the students we are getting because the areas that was being annexed was populated by mostly whites. This is why the RMSS became more black. A group of business people felt like the best thing for RM and the area was that we have one unified system. Almost two years it was negotiated and worked out to bring the systems together. In order for this to happen we sued as a result of that you had Edgecombe County Schools and you had Tarboro Schools. We made them part of the suit. We ended up with one system Rocky Mount-Nash School System and that worked. Throughout the years for some reason somebody decided that this was not good and Edgecombe County was not paying enough money to support the students in the system. The difference was made up by Rocky Mount. As we moved down the road somebody decided that we don't want any of Rocky Mount's money and a bill was introduced and it was put in the bill that RM could not pay anything to Nash-RM Schools.” This is how we arrived here today. He stated that the demerger is the best thing that we can do today. Money does follow the student. There are funds and resources available to put us in a position that we can take care of the additional students that we got. He stated that if he had to vote he would vote for the demerger. He stated that he will do everything he can to make sure we get the resources we need to make this work.

Valarie Bridges, ECPS Superintendent, shared a few things that she also shared with the community and media. I want to quote our State Superintendent and she says that” last year’s accountability results are a testament to the resilience, dedication and commitment of thousands of educators across the State. They know that we still have a steep hill to climb and that every step matters.” She also emphasized that last years school performance grades most be viewed within the context of the pandemic and it’s impact on student learning and compliance. Because of this disruption the accountability report for the 21-22 school year is the first since 2018-2019. To feature all the components of the State’s accountability framework.” Dr. Bridges provided data information before the pandemic.

Byron Ricks, 507 Edgecombe Street, stated that he has never known and architect to start building a house without a plan. How can you move forward without a vision? If you don’t have a plan you have already set yourself up for failure. He talked about being a regular student while attending school in Nash County Schools as opposed to being considered a “genius” attending Edgecombe County Schools. He asked the Board to consider the child when making the decision to move 1700 students into an already struggling school system.

William Parker, 3826 McKinley Church Road, stated that we can not go back and change the past, but we can learn from it. Stated that he is well knowledgeable about what is happening. He stated that the future is before us. Let’s face reality now. He stated that we are where we are now because of things that happened in the past that should not have happened. These children who are now in the Nash County School System are going to stay there and they are going to leave there, just like the students in the Edgecombe County School system. What about those who will come eventually. What will we do today to impact their lives? How long will we continue to depend on someone else to do for us what we can do for ourselves? He stated that he understands the fact that we need a plan. This is planning. Planning to change what is best for our children. He stated that we walk by faith not by sight. If you have to see it before you do it you are in trouble already. As long as you

depend on other people to do for you, then they control you. Take care of your own. He asked the Board to do what is right for the future.

Evelyn Shaw Wilson, 1809 Stencil Drive, stated 31 years ago the State of North Carolina looked at the school funding situation and found two or three superintendents in one county. They decided that is where the word merger comes from. They said let's merge county and city systems so we don't have to fund them. Instead of 200 superintendents 100. Nash county and Edgecombe County, there were four superintendents. In 1991 Nash County merged with the city district, which included both counties. Edgecombe County merged with the Tarboro City. In 2001 the topic came up again about merger. She stated that she sat in every meeting. She stated that discussion started along time ago. She stated that the merger popped up again in 2015. We had newly elected people on the board of the Edgecombe county board of commissioners, same with Nash and we had new Board members on Edgecombe County Board of Education as well as Nash Board of Education. We did not start talking about this this week, last week. It is fine to give your opinion, but before you give your opinion you ought to know what you are talking about and where it came from and why we are here. That was seven years ago, 2015. June 14, 2016 the General Assembly submitted a Senate Bill 382 and I would have loved to have heard all of the things I am hearing tonight, people shouting and saying no this will not happen. We did not hear that. The County Commissioners did not hear that. I was in every meeting that they had. Starting February 24, 2020 Edgecombe County Commissioners and Edgecombe County Board of Education had our first meeting about this issue. A few people were in attendance, but she wants to know where were you then. February 24, 2020 and we have been meeting, we have been working every since then. And if you have your mouth poked out put a smile on your face so the commissioners can make a good decision tonight.

Greg McLeod, ECC President, 2009 W. Wilson Street, Tarboro and 225 Tarboro Street, Rocky Mount, stated that he did not prepare anything to say tonight. He just wanted to come and listen and see the vote, but he did want to say that he stands with our Superintendent and with Edgecombe County Public Schools and if this demerger is approved we stand ready to serve those students with their dual enrollment needs and with the beautiful early college high school that they worked on together to get approved on the Rocky Mount campus. Currently they do not serve any of those students because they attend in Nash. He stated that he believes that they can do the best job possible for those students. The Rocky Mount campus is right there in their backyards. Those students are not taking dual enrollment classes there and he would love for them to do so and he stands committed.

7. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. Approval of budget amendments.

Rev. Hines moved to approve budget amendments 1 through 25 as presented.

Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

B. Financial Action that would initiate the County-line Merger of Edgecombe County Public Schools.

Mrs. Powell moved to declare that it is the intention to make a county line merger of Edgecombe County Public Schools beginning with the 2024-2025 school year; and to effect that transition, for this board to direct the County Manager to no longer appropriate current expense funds or capital outlay funds to Nash School Administrative Unit beginning fiscal year 2023-2024; and to authorize the County Manager to prepare and execute any plans or documents necessary to establish a county-line school system for Edgecombe County Public Schools beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

Rev. Hines seconded the motion.

Mrs. Harris asked questions regarding the stipulations in the bill that does not explain what happens to the students at Rocky Mount Senior High.

Mr. Wiggins stated that if it is approved it will be between the school boards. The motion was made to meet the criteria of the statute.

Mr. Wooten stated that we need a plan before we proceed. He talked about the additional costs.

After discussion by the Board the motion passed by a vote of 5 for (Wiggins, Hines, Harris, Webb and Powell) and 1 against (Wooten)

C. Approval of transfer of land to Edgemombe-Martin Electric Membership Corporation for Kingsboro Substation.  
Mr. Evans stated that when the QVC facility was originally constructed, Edgemombe-Martin Electric Membership Corporation constructed a substation to serve it and other parts of Kingsboro Industrial Park. The substation was constructed on land owned by Edgemombe County, and we believe it was the intent of the County to give that land to Edgemombe-Martin EMC. We recently discovered that conveyance never took place.

Mr. Webb moved to approve the deed to convey the property described therein to Edgemombe-Martin Electric Membership Corporation as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

D. Approval of Grant Award for Kingsboro Infrastructure Project.  
Mr. Evans stated that we received notice from the NC Department of Environmental Quality of a grant award for the Kingsboro Industrial Park Water System Improvement Project. The award, which includes federal ARPA funds, totals \$2,482,800. The project is for the renovation of the Kingsboro (Hwy 64) Booster Station. This will increase our water capacity from approximately 1 million GPD to 4-5 million GPD.

Mr. Wooten moved to approve the resolution and accompanying grant project ordinance and budget amendment as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

E. Approval of increase in mileage reimbursement rate.  
Mr. Wooten moved to approve a new mileage reimbursement rate at 62.5 cents as presented. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

F. Approval of calling for a public hearing to consider Ordinance change to add a fine for violation of the County's noise ordinance.  
Rev. Hines moved to call for and hold a public hearing at the October 4<sup>th</sup> meeting to consider taking action to add a fine to the Noise Ordinance. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

G. Approval of the participating in the NC Department of Agriculture's Spay and Neuter Program.  
Mr. Webb moved to approve the creation of the spay/neuter program for Edgemombe County as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

H. Approval of Agreement with NC Department of Agriculture for Forestry Services.  
Mrs. Harris moved to approve the agreement with the NC Forest Service, which requires a 40% cost share, or \$127,789 appropriation from the County, which is included in this year's budget and to authorize the Manager to execute the same.



Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

I. Approval of Stream Flow Rehabilitation Grant from the NC Department of Agriculture.  
Mr. Evans stated that Scott Kiser, Director of Soil and Water, applied for and successfully received a grant award from NC Department of Agriculture. The grant of \$385,226 is for the purpose of removing vegetative debris from streams and creeks in the Conetoe Creek area.

Mrs. Powell moved to approve the acceptance of this grant award with its accompanying project ordinance and budget amendment. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

J. Approval of resolutions to Authorize Applications for Infrastructure Funding.  
Mr. Evans stated that the Board previously adopted resolutions to authorize the submission of applications for grant funding available in the NC Department of Environmental Quality. Two of the projects were not awarded in the first round but are eligible to be resubmitted.

Mrs. Powell moved to adopt the resolutions as presented. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

K. Approval of the FY 2022-2023 Rural Operating Assistance (ROAP) application.

Mr. Evans started that Edgecombe is eligible to receive funds to assist residents with transportation through the Rural Operating Transportation Fund. We partner with Tar River Transit to apply for and administer these funds for us. In the enclosed application, we are applying for \$168,079. This covers three categories of funding: Elderly & Disabled Transportation Assistance, Employment Transportation Assistance and Rural General Public assistance.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA

A. Call for public hearing regarding a Special Use Permit application submitted by Gina Ann Andrews.

Rev. Hines moved to call for a public hearing to be held at the October 3, 2022 Regular Meeting. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

#### 8. APPOINTMENTS:

A. Tourism Development Authority.

Rev. Hines moved to reappoint Tina Parker and Commissioner Evelyn Powell. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

B. Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

Mr. Webb moved to appoint Susan Hoke. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

C. Animal Welfare Advisory Council.

Rev. Hines moved to appoint Susan Barnes (at-large) and Tanya Heath (Livestock). Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

#### 9. AFTERLISTS AND RELEASES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL.

Mr. Wooten moved to approve the afterlists and releases as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

#### 10. APPROVAL AND/OR REVIEW OF CONTRACTS.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the contracts as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

#### 11. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS FOR REVIEW.\*\*\*Received\*\*\*

A. Water and Sewer update.



B. Monthly Financial Summary.

12. MANAGER'S REPORT.\*\*\*Received\*\*\*  
A. Workforce Development indicators.  
B. Grant Award for Broadband.  
C. Update on ARPA funded projects.  
D. Dedication of Leonard Wiggins Parkway: September 23, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.  
E. Eastpointe representative was present and introduced herself.

13. COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

14. ATTORNEY'S REPORT.

None.

15. CLOSED SESSION.

Rev. Hines moved to go into closed session to discuss:

- A. Economic Development. [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(4)]

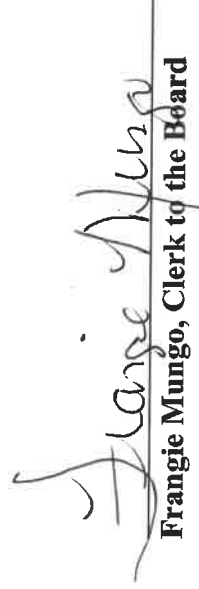
Mr. Wooten seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Rev. Hines moved to go out of closed session and resume the regular meeting. Mr. Wooten seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Michael Matthews, Assistant County Manager, provided information on proposed safety changes to the Commissioners' chambers.

16. REV. HINES MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING UNTIL OCTOBER 3, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M. MR. WEBB SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Approved October 3, 2022.

  
Frankie Mungo, Clerk to the Board