

**Meeting Minutes  
January 25-27, 2023**

**RETREAT – DAY 1**

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met for the FY 2023 Annual Retreat on Wednesday, January 25, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. in the Harris Conference Center at Central Piedmont Community College, 3216 CPCC Harris Campus Drive, Charlotte, NC.

**Present:** Chair George Dunlap and Vice Chair Elaine Powell  
Commissioners Leigh Altman, Patricia “Pat” Cotham,  
Arthur Griffin, Mark Jerrell, Vilma D. Leake, Laura J Meier,  
and Susan Rodriguez-McDowell  
County Manager Dena R. Diorio  
County Attorney Tyrone C. Wade  
Deputy Clerk to the Board Arlissa Eason

**Absent:** None

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dunlap followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**Welcome**

Chair Dunlap recognized Dr. Kandi Deitemeyer, President of Central Piedmont Community College who gave welcome remarks.

**County Manager’s Introduction**

Chair Dunlap recognized Dena Diorio, County Manager who gave an overview of the goals and expectations for the Board Retreat.

**Agenda Overview & Binder Materials**

Chair Dunlap recognized Adrian Cox, Budget Director who gave an overview of the agenda for the Board Retreat and binder materials.

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### Economic Outlook

Chair Dunlap recognized Brandon Simmons, County Economist, who gave an economic update.

### Comments

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if slide #40 of the presentation spoke to the forecast for the County. *Mr. Simmons said it was referencing the future forecast, and if growth continues the current projections there would be a 7% increase from last year's budgeted numbers.*

Commissioner Altman asked to have clarification on the job market numbers. *Mr. Simmons said policies in 2019 helped keep the unemployment rate down. He said there would always be unemployment in the economy. He said the high number of applicant ratio was due to applicants applying for a particular job, but not necessarily having the skill set or what the job required them to do.*

Commissioner Griffin asked if the vacancy rate for rental apartments was higher or lower this year. *Mr. Simmons said he did not have those figures.*

Commissioner Griffin asked what the management company enterprise numbers being down by 10.7% meant. *Mr. Simmons said those numbers were about large headquarters and corporate suites.*

Commissioner Jerrell said he liked the comparative data of the presentation about being able to see other counties' data for comparison. He said it would be helpful to see who was impacted by the data that was being shown, in particular in racial disparities. *Mr. Simmons said he would continue to update the data and add the figures.*

Vice Chair Powell thanked Mr. Simmons for the presentation. She asked if the figures on the apartment rental market were based on the 100 largest cities. *Mr. Simmons said yes, it was based on the 100 largest cities.*

Vice Chair Powell asked if there was any data on rental subsidies provided by the local government. *Mr. Simmons said he did not have those figures.*

County Manager Diorio said they did not have access to data as to what other cities were doing when it came to rental subsidies.

Vice Chair Powell said it would be good to collaborate with other team members and find visibility

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to that data. She said it would be good to see what was working.

Commissioner Cotham asked for clarification on the sources from where the data came from. *Mr. Simmons said the Apartment list source was a website-based company, and they did data collection. He said he would have to look back and see specifically where the sources came from and provide the information.*

Commissioner Cotham asked how the data provided showed changes as it related to COVID and remote work. *Mr. Simmons said currently data provided by Castle Security showed space occupancy at 54%. He said what he had seen was that the return to office work was very slow.*

Commissioner Meier said she found all the information and trends fascinating. She asked if affordable housing was a need based on the data being presented. *Mr. Simmons said yes, affordable housing was a need, and the rising home prices made it a bigger issue.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked when looking at the data about the 100 cities, did it show where the County was when it came to wealth and income inequality. *Mr. Simmons said that data would be provided to her at a later time.*

Commissioner Leake said she was concerned with the average citizen understanding the report being presented. She said the information needed to be disseminated to have the average citizen understand the impact it would have on County funding. *Mr. Simmons said it was difficult information, but they had made strides to take written reports and have them listed on their website on a recorded comprehensive form. He said monthly, a housing report was being done through social media, and every quarter, a report was being listed on the County website. He said County residents could also reach out to him directly if they had any questions or comments.*

Chair Dunlap said overall it was clear Mecklenburg County was doing well. He said there were some areas of concern. He said most applications for jobs were done via the Internet, and 15.6% of the County population did not have Internet access. He said the time a house was on the market had increased, and that, in turn, would bring down the cost of housing. He said considering Charlotte being among one of the fastest growing cities in the country, and yet the rental market fell in the middle for rental rates spoke well of the city. He said moving forward, he would like to see data that showed the initiatives being put forth by the Boards actions and what impacts it made. He said this would allow them to see if the needle was being moved in the right direction. He said some of the current data for affordable housing did show they were on the right track. He said concerning health initiatives he would like to see information on what the Board actions had done and its impact. He said he wanted to collect that data, have it disseminated, and feel comfortable that the Board was doing things that positively impacted the

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community.

County Manager Diorio said there were a lot of moving pieces of things that they did not have any control over. She said she did not want to bring data that showed there was not a positive impact because there were a lot of moving parts. She said there was not always going to be a direct impact seen based on actions being done.

Chair Dunlap thanked Mr. Simmons for his presentation.

### **Pulse Report**

Chair Dunlap recognized Dr. Monica Allen, Strategic Planning and Evaluation Director who gave an overview of the 2023 Community Pulse report, and an update on the performance of Board Budget Priorities.

### **Comments**

Commissioner Jerrell thanked Dr. Allen for the presentation. He said he liked that she had come up with conclusions and recommendations around housing and suggested rental assistance as a solution. He said the feedback he received from the community was around rent subsidies the Board had contributed to. He said that with respect to health insurance, information could be provided on the Hispanic population data as it relates to being uninsured.

Commissioner Jerrell asked, concerning food insecurity, if the numbers presented show an increase in SNAP applications. *Dr. Allen said the number of families receiving Food and Nutrition services had increased and that was a proxy for predicting food insecurity.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked for follow-up information regarding the breakdown of livable wages. *Dr. Allen said she would provide that information to him directly at a later time.*

Commissioner Meier asked for more specifics on the livable wage figures provided. *Dr. Allen said the figures provided showed the minimum salaries that were needed in order to live in the County.*

Commissioner Meier asked if the sources that provided data for mental health were good. *Dr. Allen said the source was considered self-report data, which was considered secondary data. She said primary data would come from actual mental health providers. She said secondary data was a good source, but it was secondary data that was less strong than primary data.*

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Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked to be provided with a demographic breakdown regarding wages.

Commissioner Griffin said the figures provided on the economy for the County were strong, but disparities in wages and wage growth had accelerated and correlated to large differences in education by race. He said her recommendation was to lobby for a higher minimum wage and asked if education was being given up on. *Dr. Allen said the recommendations were suggestions the Board could directly influence. She said she was not suggesting giving up on education, but the suggestion to the Board was to lobby for higher minimum wages.* Commissioner Griffin suggestions education, when it came to getting higher wages, was not telling CMS what to do. He said he had a trustee role on the Board with Central Piedmont Community College (CPC), and there, he learned about academic assessment testing. He said there was a gateway with certain skill sets to attain higher-paying jobs. He said education was a critical piece for County residents to get prepared and get the skill set for higher-paying jobs. He said whether it was the Board or the City Council, it needed to be figured out how to prepare the younger generation for higher paying jobs through an education path.

Vice Chair Powell said that based on the data she was reading, mental health was in a code red status. She said it was important to recognize the need for mental health and try to work towards solutions. She said in the data provided for land development, there was good news. She said as County Commissioners they were responsible for protecting the environment. She said natural resources being lost to land development was a burden that affected the environment. She discussed the need for higher wages for healthcare support staff.

Commissioner Leake thanked Dr. Allen for her presentation. She said she was glad to see the presentation of data when it came to wrap-around programs being offered by the County. She said she agreed with Commissioner Griffin in his earlier mention of education being the key to getting skill set development for higher wages.

Chair Dunlap said he wanted to talk about the student population change. He said if the population in Mecklenburg County was decreasing, then that meant the student population was decreasing as well. He said the Board was getting ready to review information in supporting a Bond package. He said it was important to pay attention because supporting school bonds was related to the increasing population. He said if the elderly population was increasing, the County needed to make sure they were ready to serve them. He said the living wage was \$18 an hour. He asked what the County was paying as a starting rate. *County Manager Diorio said the starting pay was \$20 an hour.*

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### BREAK FOR WORKING LUNCH

**NOTE: Clerk to the Board Kristine M. Smith left the meeting. Minutes were taken by Deputy Clerk Arlissa Eason.**

**The Board took a break at 12:10 p.m. and returned at 12:27 p.m.**

### Comments

Commissioner Jerrell asked what the contributing factors in racial disparities concerning Maternal and Child health were. *Dr. Washington said the three-fold difference in infant mortality between white and black families had been a fairly consistent pattern in Mecklenburg County and many large cities across the country. He said factors like access to prenatal care and quality or adequate prenatal care had babies being born early and at lower birth weights. He said early births presented children with complications in the first year of life. He said accidents in the first year of life or unintentional injuries were also a factor. He said babies dying in sleep-related accidents or killed in the first year of life added to the majority of categories that were seen in disproportionalities among white and black families.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked, with respect to Public Health, what the Board could do to address the issue around Maternal and Child Health. *Dr. Washington said several initiatives specifically addressed certain populations. He said they provided case management for high-risk pregnant women and kids born prematurely. He said the case management provided wrap-around services that assisted families. He said there was a new program called a Guided Journey, a partnership with CareRing. He said it would provide community health workers who were trained to provide support in the prenatal care period through the first year of life. He said in reality, there were a lot of women who did not receive prenatal care early enough. He said there were care managers who were on site at the OBGYN clinics and provided wrap-around services to families. He said that was a service that was unique to Mecklenburg County. He said there were Safe sleep campaigns, cribs, and safe sleep resources to help families.*

Commissioner Jerrell said the Village Heartbeat program numbers had decreased, he asked what the outreach initiatives looked like for the program. *Dr. Washington said the number of participating churches remained strong, but the team's participation changed throughout different times of the year due to covid and safety concerns due to the pandemic.*

Commissioner Leake asked what was being done to help with particular zip codes that had strong data on obesity. *Dr. Washington said trends of obesity were rising in the community and across the country. He said the Village Heartbeat program was a great example of what was being done*

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*in the County to help specific communities. He said the program provided education, and resources to the community. He said beyond that they had a portfolio that showed work being done in food access to make healthy food access a priority. He said there was support with a diabetes program, and activities with Park and Recreation to live actively.*

Commissioner Leake asked what teen pregnancy initiatives were being done. *Dr. Washington said teen births had been declining, and birthing-age women were delaying pregnancy. He said a more coordinated process was being done to provide support for prenatal care to the first year of life for families. He said it was not just the County's role, but community partners, and health care agencies in the community to assist in the efforts.*

Commissioner Griffin asked if there were two Village Heartbeat programs. *Dr. Washington said there was only one program, initiated 8 ½ years ago through the County as a partnership with faith-based organizations.*

Commissioner Griffin asked what programs were available for women in the early stages of pregnancy. *Dr. Washington said there were several program areas a pregnant woman would come into. He said Medicaid could be one area to come in. He said they could also come into the health department, confirm their pregnant status and get resources. He said if they came in through the CareRing initiative, they would get intensive care coordination with a nurse.*

Commissioner Griffin asked if the women participating in the program were offered guidance throughout their pregnancy stages. *Dr. Washington said for the women who were on Medicaid or the CareRing programs, those pregnancies were followed throughout by case managers.*

Commissioner Cotham asked what was being done about the women population in the foster care system getting pregnant to continue benefits once they aged out of the foster care system. *Dr. Washington said in family clinics, they offered robust solutions for planned pregnancies or avoiding pregnancies.*

Jacqueline McKnight, Deputy Director of the Department of Social Services, said the numbers were down. She said that in 2017, there was an amended program for foster care recipients, and based on qualifications, they could receive benefits until age 21.

Commissioner Cotham asked if programs were being offered for at-risk youth who are not graduating. Dr. Allen said she would have to check on the information and provide it to her later.

Commissioner Meier asked was Unified work development a County program. *Dr. Allen said it was a County program with the Department of Community Resources.*

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County Manager Diorio said the Unified Work Development program was one program that was run internally by the County and partnered with other organizations to help with the training and upscaling. She said there was a whole other host of workforce development programs the County worked with. She said there would be a presentation on Workforce development that would detail all the information on the programs offered.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if the spike in residents receiving legal representation was being paid for by County COVID dollars. County Manager Diorio said the program was funded with County dollars, not COVID *funding*.

Commissioner Griffin asked if Dr. Allen could collaborate with DPI to obtain data on children's non-proficiency rates. Dr. Allen said she would provide that information to him later.

Chair Dunlap said when he looked at the graduation rate and the student achievement rate, it appeared the kids graduating would not be successful. He asked if there could be figures provided that showed what was the impact of the digital divide and student performance. *Dr. Allen said she might be able to get data from the Chief Accountability officer at CMS and provide the information to him at a later time.*

### Access to Health Care

Chair Dunlap recognized Dr. Raynard Washington, Health Care Director who gave information related to access in Health care for Mecklenburg County.

### Comments

Commissioner Meier asked if low-cost clinics provided the same services as FQHC-Federally Qualified Health Centers. *Dr. Washington said they did not, but they provided referral pathways to get people access to those services as appropriate.*

Commissioner Meier asked how many residents were not being served by health services. *Dr. Washington said that was a difficult question to answer and he could not say specifically. The low bar would be the difference between those being served and the whole number of the uninsured population.*

Commissioner Meier asked if decreasing the number of people uninsured was a function of the State. *Dr. Washington said that was correct, it was a role the Board could advocate for.*



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Commissioner Meier asked to be explained the issues with CWA. *Dr. Washington said he did not have any information he could offer at the moment, and they were continuing their partnership with them.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked about the spike and decline in infant deaths in the Hispanic population data. *Dr. Washington said it was not a trend, the numbers were small, and typically the data was shown in three-year increments.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked based on the data provided what primary care ineligibility was the Hispanic population not able to afford. *Dr. Washington said the people referred to as ineligible were the undocumented residents living in the community, and those individuals were not eligible for many of the coverage programs, in particular singular adults.*

Commissioner Meier said that the population could go to the FQHC-Federally Qualified Health Centers. *Dr. Washington said that was correct, many of them did go to those centers.*

Commissioner Cotham asked if there was a process where physicians or dentist could volunteer their services to help the community. *Dr. Washington said the County did have a program called the Physicians Reach Out program. He said it was largely a volunteer-based operation, and various specialties of doctors and dentists donated their time. He said the program process was robust and about \$20/ \$30 Million worth of care was provided yearly. He said there was a weblink page being worked on partnered with MedLink where all those resources would be listed. He said the information would be provided to the Board at a later time.*

Commissioner Griffin asked if there was any plan to have healthcare education provided in the up-and-coming and existing Community Resource centers. *Dr. Washington said yes there were plans to provide educational opportunities at the centers. He said at VCW- Valerie Woodard Community Resource Center there was a health clinic that provided basic care, and there was a WIC clinic as well that provided services and immunizations. He said there was also a community care worker with Novant who identified patients who needed services and made referrals. He said at the Northeast Community Resource Center (CRC) there would be a larger clinic that would offer a larger array of public health services. He said future CRCs would include larger-scale services and dentist services as well.*

Commissioner Griffin asked if there was a capacity to offer transportation services for residents to regularly visit their primary care physicians. *Dr. Washington said managed care organizations had a responsibility to manage the care of their patients. He said a pilot process called Medicaid*

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*transformation was coming to the County, and that managed care organizations would receive an incentive payment for providing wrap-around services including transportation.*

Deputy County Manager Anthony Troutman said the County provided non-emergency medical transportation to doctor's appointments within the Department of Social Service (DSS). He said they were in the process of doing the first phase of a comprehensive transportation study to see the relationship between the County fleet of vehicles and the relationship with Medicaid.

Commissioner Altman asked why getting more FQHC-Federally Qualified Health Centers were not being approved at the federal level. *Dr. Washington said he did not know why that was happening since the number of access points had been reduced during COVID and had not been opened back.*

Commissioner Altman asked for more summarized data on who was uninsured. *Dr. Washington said he could provide numbers directly to her with more specifics at a later time.*

Commissioner Altman asked whose responsibility was to ensure hospital authorities complied with indigent care obligations. *Dr. Washington said he was not prepared to speak on any specific Health care system but could speak to Health care systems in the country. He said the IRS was responsible that entities were meeting their tax-exempt requirements. He said part of keeping a tax-exempt requirement was that an organization must invest a certain amount of money, and re-invest a certain number of resources in the community they serve to keep the tax-exempt status. He said there were other requirements as well, and there was a lot of discussion around it because there was very little limited accountability. He said the State treasure had a growing interest in quantifying what re-investments were happening. He said in terms of the amount of indigent care provided it had factors like charge sticker price set by the health care provider, the price being reimbursed back to a health care provider for a procedure, and the cost of doing the procedure.*

Vice Chair Powell asked what the Board could do to make the affordability of health care more attainable for the younger generation. *Dr. Washington said advocacy for employers to offer affordable healthcare options for their employees was important. He said the Affordable Care Act tried to close gaps in the health care needs, but there was still advocacy to be done to make sure everyone was able to afford healthcare.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked if, even with Medicaid expansion, there would be a population left uninsured. *Dr. Washington said yes, there would be a large estimate of people uninsured. He said due to changing dynamics and demographics in the community there would be people not be eligible for Medicaid.*

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Commissioner Leake asked what was being done to educate the male population about teen pregnancy. *Dr. Washington said family planning services were not just for women, but he wanted to be transparent and said they were mostly used by women. He said school programs were being done in school for younger males, as well as community partner outreach for youth male education.*

Commissioner Leake asked how the CW Williams program could be expanded so it could have a larger reach in the population. *County Manager Diorio said ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) dollars had funded that program. She said continuing to find opportunities to fund those types of programs was key to keeping larger community outreach.*

Chair Dunlap asked what caused premature birth. *Dr. Washington said some factors were the health of the mother before getting pregnant, not receiving prenatal care, substance abuse, no access to prenatal care, and genetic challenges.*

Chair Dunlap said education on teen pregnancy needed to be done in high school to create interference and awareness. He said he heard earlier in the presentation that more FQHC-Federally Qualified Health Centers were not being opened, and hoped the RGI committee would put it on the federal legislative agenda to advocate for more FQHC-Federally Qualified Health Centers. Lastly, he said he would like to see what funding would be needed at a County level to help open more FQHC-Federally Qualified Health Center prototypes.

Commissioner Griffin said he wanted to see what an education strategy would look like regarding helping people understand the importance of their behaviors and bettering their health. *Dr. Washington said there was a lot of work being done in that area. He said there was framework research was done that had looked at data that gave insight into residents' factors on the length of life and quality of life.*

### **Roles In Housing Code Enforcement**

Chair Dunlap recognized Ebenezer Gujjarlapudi, Director of Land Use and Environmental Services, and Jane Taillon, City of Charlotte, Code Enforcement Manager who gave an update on the City and County roles in housing code enforcement.

### **Comments**

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Commissioner Meier asked if a resident called her with complaints of mold in their apartment, and a landlord that did not help them was that a City issue. *Mrs. Taillon said that was a complicated question, they did not enforce mold. She said the City did not enforce mold, but they could look at a structure to see what was causing the mold.*

Commissioner Leake asked if Code Enforcement officers were City employees. *Mrs. Taillon said yes, that was correct.*

Commissioner Leake said there were complaints from residents in her district not being helped because there were not enough Code Enforcement officers. *Mrs. Taillon said their jurisdiction was mainly within the city limits and it did not allow them to go outside of city limits.*

Commissioner Cotham said she had a concern over the years about how the Code enforcers did their job. She talked about several occurrences where she witnessed residents' interactions, and the Code enforcement officers. She said crisis situations needed to be handled with more humanity, and less threatening processes by Code enforcement officers. *Mrs. Taillon said the goal of her employees was not for residents to have a negative experience with them. She said the housing paperwork being sent to residents was based on legislation rules. She said the verbiage on those letters was something that could not be changed due to those legislative rules. She said she encouraged anyone who had a negative interaction with her team members to let her know directly. She said she had no issue addressing interactions that were not appropriate with residents. She said the goal was to have communities that were safe and healthy.*

Vice Chair Powell said residents reached out to her in past times referencing that Code enforcement came to their homes in a militant style. She said there were cultural and financial issues with residents when it came to understanding housing codes. She asked if the time frame to address a housing code violation was a state requirement. *Mrs. Taillon said property owners had up to 180 days to bring housing violations into compliance. She said they assisted property owners by connecting them to housing resources to help them rectify the violations. She said if a property was owner occupied, they had up to 1 year to bring the violation up to compliance.*

Chair Dunlap said if there was a policy stating a home be torn down due to a violation not being rectified, that policy needed to change. He said due to the situation with affordable housing unless it was declared that a home was irreparable, it should be fixed, never demolished. He said he wanted to understand where the line was between what city code enforcement did versus the areas that were outside the limits. *Mrs. Taillon said the health and sanitation ordinances would be enforced by the city; however, the city did do referrals for violations to be addressed by LUESA.*

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Chair Dunlap asked what the County could do to have violations enforced outside the city limits. *Mr. Gujjarlapudi said there had been a discussion happening to bring information to the Board to address gaps in areas on the County properties not serviced due to being outside city limits. He said the loophole in coverage of outside city limits was in the health and sanitation code area, regarding housing violation codes the City did address outside city-limit properties.*

Chair Dunlap asked how the County could assist in partnering with the NOAH (Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing) program in having homes renovated up to code. He said part of the cost of re-doing affordable housing was housing codes changing at the time a renovation was being done. He asked could grandfathering organizations that did the renovation work with the previous codes be done. *Mr. Gujjarlapudi said the state code mandated what any new renovation beyond a certain threshold had to be. He said there was very little flexibility to grandfathered organizations that did property renovations because the codes were based on historical issues that happened that required the code to be changed. He said the state changed overall codes every 6 years. He said they also gave new guidance to changes every 3 months which the County was mandated to follow.*

Mrs. Taillon said she wanted to circle back and clarify that the only time a property was considered deemed for demolition was when the repairs exceeded 65% of the home value.

### **FY2024 Budget Public Engagement Strategy**

Chair Dunlap recognized Adrian Cox, Budget Director who gave an update on the Budget Public Engagement activities, including an update on particular projects.

### **Comments**

Commissioner Jerrell asked how many Advisory boards they had. *Chair Dunlap said there were over 30 boards.*

Commissioner Jerrell said if they reached out to all boards for participation, only a small number reached back to participate. He said he was curious to see why that was. *Chair Dunlap said the participation response was based on the nature of what they did and whether or not they would need support from the County.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked what the goal of participants for the year was. *Mr. Cox said it would have to be compared to what was done in the past. He said representation was something to look*

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*at as well. He said that based on those numbers, if they could increase the number of participants as well as representation that would be a goal of success.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked what the amount was being considered for participatory budgeting. *Mr. Cox said project implementation was being done for the year and then there would be an assessment.*

Vice Chair Powell asked if all the Advisory boards were asked to participate. *Mr. Cox said that was correct. He said communication had been shared letting them know what type of participation was being asked, and how the process would work.*

Vice Chair Powell asked if the legal minimum requirements for participation were well above the set margins. *Mr. Cox said that was correct, the only legal public engagement that was required by law was to have one public hearing after the County Manager presented the recommended Budget, and they were having two public hearings.*

County Manager Diorio said for Advisory boards that did not participate, they were able to submit a written request/ response.

Commissioner Griffin asked if the previously set Budget priorities were being redone. *Chair Dunlap said they would be discussing whether or not they would be changed, and the Board would decide based on those changes what to change or add.*

County Manager Diorio said there would be a priority-setting exercise and at that time changes or additions would be made to the set Budget priorities.

Commissioner Griffin and County Manager Diorio had a brief discussion on the Budget set priorities data, and how he understood how those priorities were set based on demographic data. *County Manager Diorio said she would provide the data available to him at a later time.*

Commissioner Leake suggested to Chair Dunlap to set up a meeting regarding discussing recommendations of the Ad hoc Board after February. She thanked County Manager Diorio for her Budget recommendations. She said there was a concern with Habitat for Humanity regarding the home repairs program on how and where they serviced the homes on the program. *County Manager Diorio said there were sums of money allocated for critical home repairs, and an RFP was done to see what other organizations could do home repairs outside of Habitat for Humanity.*

Commissioner Altman asked if Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) teachers were the highest paid in the state. County Manager Diorio said the supplement was the highest in the state. *Mr.*

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*Cox said there was a state salary schedule, and then the added County supplement made the salaries the highest in the state.*

Commissioner Altman asked what was the amount the County contributed to the CMS operational budget. *Mr. Cox said the amount was \$20 Million last year, and \$20 Million the current year.*

Commissioner Altman asked if the new floor baseline increase was \$40 Million, did that mean that was the amount moving forward as a matter of law because the Board could not go backward even in fallen enrollment. *County Manager Diorio said the only time a budget cut could be done to the CMS budget was when a cut was made to the County budget. She said that would be the only time you could bring cuts to their CMS funding below the baseline.*

Commissioner Altman said she wanted to highlight the Budget simulator information that was provided. She said as someone growing up attending public school there was nothing, she would like more than funding education. She said she wanted the community to see the depth of how the Board was committed to funding those efforts. She advised the public to engage by accessing the Budget Simulator tool and see how making changes to the budget changed the dynamics of funding for certain programs. She said that would show more perspective on how difficult it was to keep the budget balanced and cover all the expenses.

Chair Dunlap recognized Dena Diorio, County Manager who gave a wrap-up of day one of the Retreat.

### **RECESS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Griffin to recess the meeting until Thursday, January 26, 2023, at 8:30 a.m.

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**RETREAT – DAY 2**

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met for the FY 2023 Annual Retreat on Thursday, January 26, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. in the Harris Conference Center at Central Piedmont Community College, 3216 CPCC Harris Campus Drive, Charlotte, NC.

**Present:** Chair George Dunlap and Vice Chair Elaine Powell  
Commissioners Leigh Altman, Patricia “Pat” Cotham,  
Arthur Griffin, Mark Jerrell, Vilma D. Leake, Laura J Meier,  
and Susan Rodriguez-McDowell  
County Manager Dena R. Diorio  
County Attorney Tyrone C. Wade  
Deputy Clerk to the Board Arlissa Eason

**Absent:** Clerk to the Board Kristine M. Smith

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dunlap followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**Welcome**

Chair Dunlap recognized Dena Diorio, County Manager who provided remarks of day two of the Board Retreat.

**Update on Comprehensive Strategies in Workforce Development**

Chair Dunlap recognized Anthony Trotman, Deputy County Manager; Dr. Charles Mitchell, Central Piedmont Community College Executive Director of Strategic Engagement; Christina Thigpen, City of Charlotte Deputy Director of Economic Development; Blair Stanford, Executive Director of Charlotte Executive Leadership Council, and Austin Halbert, Chairman CEO of Radius Group. The recognized group gave an update on various activities related to Workforce development.



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### Comments

Commissioner Altman thanked the presenters for the presentation. She commented on how the tools being developed to disseminate employee and employer data would be groundbreaking for future workforce development.

Commissioner Griffin asked was there key performance indicators available to the public, whether was there a commitment from the Ecosystem of Steering Committee to pay a livable wage for the trained program participants, and whether was there a written commitment from the City, County, and private sector to hire local graduates of their perspective training programs. *Mrs. Thigpen said there was development with some initial KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) related to the framework, but the work would be finalized when the workstreams were further along. She said the information would be updated on the website, as the information was still evolving. Mr. Austin said regarding Commissioner Griffin's comment on migrating talent being hired; they had set out to solve that factor with an initial project engaging employers, and building those pipelines. He said they did not have data to track and report out in a public way yet. He said they were looking at traditional and non-traditional workforce programs to create better public and private partnerships. Mr. Troutman said there was a review being done on all training program partnerships the County had to make sure that enrollment, training completion, hiring, and retention were being done. Dr. Mitchell said his organization was looking at different ways to pay for college, and they were in the process of putting a system in place.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if the information Mr. Halbert provided was part of the research tool being created. *Mr. Halbert said the chart being referenced was just sample data to show what types of jobs were being looked at.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell said she was concerned that Human services money would be spent on a pilot that could potentially help highly profitable corporations suppress wages for lower-end workers. *Mr. Halbert said her concern was valid, and they were looking to make sure public dollars supported training that invested in jobs that lead to higher wages, and a better quality of life.*

Commissioner Leake said there would be no change unless services of training and education went to where the people were located at. *Mr. Troutman said concerning access points, library employees were being trained on how to help residents access the internet, and navigate employment systems. He said many of the libraries doing so were in Commissioner Leake district.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked if input was being given by the people being affected by workforce development, and what was the amount given for stipends in the current workforce

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development programs. *Mr. Troutman said there were various stipend programs. He said a program called She Builds this City had a stipend given to the participant while they attended the program, another program was Meck Success which provided a stipend while the person participated in the program and a housing stipend was provided as well. Mrs. Thigpen said with her program the way information was collected was by getting community feedback through community outreach. Mr. Halbert said although there seemed to be a lot of data provided in the presentation, the information was needed to figure out how to bridge the gap in workforce development efforts. Dr. Mitchell said the Queen City Collaborative had an education and workforce development division. He said they each would work together with non-profits and grassroots organizations to gather information to reach the expressed needs and act on the feedback provided.*

### **Total Rewards**

Chair Dunlap recognized Keisha Young, Human Resources Director who gave an update on the County's Human Resources, including an overview of compensation and benefits.

### **Comments**

Vice Chair Powell asked what was the HR relationship with the Sheriff's department. *Mrs. Young said they had their recruitment and their own employee relations department. She said what the County handled for them was their Benefits department and they shared the Employee service center.*

Commissioner Powell asked for clarification if the County HR handled an exit interview for the Sherriff's office. *Mrs. Young said they did not.*

Commissioner Meier asked what job abandonment meant. *Mrs. Young said that's when they saw temporary staff not coming back to work.*

Commissioner Meier asked where the County ranked as an employer regarding the amount of hired employees. *Mrs. Young said currently they were second behind Wake County.*

Commissioner Cotham said Mrs. Youngs' presentation was the best so far in her opinion. She said she was glad she touched on current HR trends, but wished those trends would be related to the information later discussed. She said she would contact her directly with possible questions at a later time.

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Commissioner Griffin asked if employees could get reimbursements back from classes taken at CPCC, could they partner with Winston Salem State University and their Nursing accelerated program to get those graduates to come to work in Charlotte, and could the City and County help in providing funding to purchase a CDL truck for the CPCC CDL program. *Mrs. Young said the County did offer tuition reimbursement, it was \$5,000 for core degrees and \$2,500 for non-core degrees.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell said the HR website section was not being utilized as best they could. She said working for the County was rewarding, and highlighting that in ways would be beneficial. She said Commissioners were not utilized to help with employee appreciation efforts. She said she would like to be involved in those efforts. *Mrs. Young said they had currently partnered with Public Information, and the first block of information that came up on the County website was about Mecklenburg County jobs.*

Commissioner Leake suggested that recruitment efforts should be made for graduates of other nursing programs in Winston-Salem. She said something similar to the Candy Striper intern program that used to be done in hospitals, should be done for high school children as interning in County government. Lastly, she said better communication with the public about County vacancies was needed.

Commissioner Jerrell asked what the trend was contributing to an increase in hiring. *Mrs. Young said the increased capacity in HR staff, as well as the new initiatives in recruitment and marketing, helped as well.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked how challenging it was to still recruit in the current ecosystem. *Mrs. Young said it was still challenging, it was still a struggle. She said organizations were all pulling from the same pool of employees.*

Chair Dunlap asked regarding employee data related to stress and the DSS department, to what degree was the stress related to caseloads. *Mrs. Young said caseloads were directly related to the stress and burnout of those employees.*

Chair Dunlap asked why it took 80 days to hire someone. *Mrs. Young said it was due to the market they were currently in, and the HR processes. She said she hoped to have it decreased to the corporate goal of 58 days. She said with hiring additional recruiters the process will eventually be quicker.*

Chair Dunlap asked how internal staff was told about internal job vacancies. *Mrs. Young said all employees had access to all the job postings. She said jobs were also being highlighted in the*

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*Employee news to remind staff of those jobs out there and post the highlighted jobs on social media. She said with the Job fair events she hoped not only external applicants came, but internal applicants came and saw all the opportunities across the County.*

### **BREAK FOR WORKING LUNCH**

### **Mecklenburg County Equity Action Plan**

Chair Dunlap recognized LaShaun Carter, Equity and Inclusion Director who gave an update on the County's Equity Action Plan, including the ongoing work of the Equity Investments Ad Hoc Committee.

### **Comments**

Chair Dunlap said before moving forward with the discussion he wanted to ask his colleagues on the Equity Committee to allow others to ask questions first. He said the reason an Ad Hoc committee report had not been given was due to them not having any recommendations. He said the committee was continuing to do the work and study what the best options were on how to spend the funding.

Vice Chair Powell asked for the department equity actions team's positive and frustrating feedback she had heard to be explained. *Mr. Carter said the biggest obstacle had been the moments no one was in the office and at those times there was no direction. He said there was also a disconnection between what Departments were doing and the trajectory of what the department was. He said templates were created to identify what was in the strategic business plan, support the achievements of those objectives, and make sure there was a tighter connection between what a subgroup was doing from an equity perspective.*

Vice Chair Powell asked if he could share some examples of seeing the Equity work coming through. *Mr. Carter gave the example of the IT department and explained how employees made the connection between the work they did and the impact on the community at large. He said explaining to IT employees how their work with internal employees was efficient and supported their work structures, they were helping those who were in direct work service with the community at large do more work thoughtfully.*

Commissioner Cotham said she wanted to recognize Commissioner Jerrell for his efforts in initiating talks around equity action plans. He said it made her more aware of the topic.

Commissioner Altman said she got to see the result of the leadership that had been shown by

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previous Commissioners on equity efforts. She gave an example of the process of choosing a contractor, and how the process had evolved due to the goals and commitments that had been made around equity. She said she was particularly excited to hear about concrete programs that were data-driven and proven in other communities that had a direct impact. She asked what the target dates were for when the recommendations would be made. *Mr. Carter said they were in the process of scheduling one final deep dive with community partners. He said once that was completed, it would be up to the Ad Hoc committee to decide what route to go in terms of investments. He said the Ad Hoc committee would decide to identify strategies, and then his team would start to develop programs. He said he imagined this would all occur in the spring season.*

Chair Dunlap said he wanted to pause and share that if you had been on the Board for any length of time, it was known that when something new was proposed it took about six months to get it up and running. He said this was to make sure metrics, timelines, and goals were established. He said the Ad Hoc committee timeline was to propose their recommendations by Budget time so they could get the Board's support on funding already appropriated.

Commissioner Griffin said the presentation being discussed was phenomenal, he was happy to be in an organization that highlighted and focused on fair play and equitable opportunities. He said outward-looking opportunities could include creating a culture that encourage fair play and equity that focused on minority opportunities in terms of contracts, etc. He said that based on the data provided, inward-looking opportunities needed to show what were the goals being established to reduce disparity gaps. He said it was delightful to hear a report on fair play and equity.

Commissioner Leake thanked Mr. Carter for his presentation. She said she was worried as to the direction the Ad Hoc Committee would move on fairly to benefit not only one side of town but everyone. She spoke of instances she felt the needs of her district had been ignored, and not included when it came to equity. *Mr. Carter said the first thing to do was to acknowledge that to eradicate systematic racism and oppression it would reside with intentional effort, but work would need to be reorganized and come back. He said that's how communities ended up with segregation, by reorganizing under the pretenses of class when it use to be under the pretense of race. He said hard choices needed to be made where the resources were needed by overinvesting in those that had been historically disenfranchised. He continued to make connections between Commissioner Leake's comments and suggested how equity would bring forward change in those areas.*

Commissioner Jerrell thanked Mr. Carter for the presentation. He said the presentation added a tremendous amount of value, clarity, and direction. He said he wanted to clarify that the County operational staff had implemented the Equity action plan back in 2019. He said the County

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operational staff deserved all the credit for making sure the plan was implemented and for the Board supporting Equity investment initiatives at that time. He said what was missing was a person who could drive and shape those efforts and frame things in a way to make them actionable. He said by having Mr. Carter come to work for the County, he was the person needed for the role to fit those needs.

Commissioner Meier said Mr. Carter had narrowed down the goals of the Board and was practical in his approach, she appreciated that. She said she appreciated his leadership, and he came in at the right time.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell said it was a home run to have Mr. Carter on the team. She said learning about issues from people who are close to the issues was being seen in the theme the Board was wanting. She said the work Mr. Carter was doing was worth to be funded. She said people needed to know that leadership mattered and airing grievances was not going to get wanted results, but the work Mr. Carter was doing with the Board was a pathway to getting the wanted results.

Chair Dunlap thanked the staff for initiating equity talks and what priorities should be. He thanked Mr. Carter for coming in and giving the Board direction on the work they wanted to do around equity initiatives. He commented on the process of hiring outside firms and how equity lenses were being used to hire them. He said he was extremely excited about the work the Ad Hoc committee was doing.

### **Covid Relief Funding Update**

Chair Dunlap recognized David Boyd, Financial Officer who introduced speakers that would give an update on the County's COVID relief funding. Emily Desiderio, Finance Deputy CFO, Alyson Neely, ARPA Program Manager, Jennifer Williams, and Michael Bryant, Deputy County Manager made presentations.

### **Comments**

Commissioner Meier asked if in round one of funding the money needed to be spent by 2024. *Mrs. Neely said the money needed to be spent by 2024 or obligated to be spent by a provider under contract; being under contract they would have till December 2026 to spend the funds.*

Commissioner Meier asked what happens to the money not spent in 2024. *Mrs. Neely said they would evaluate how providers were spending their money, and bring that information to the County Manager for her team to reevaluate and reallocate funds if needed. County Manager*

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*Diorio said that based on the information being presented monies would be reallocated, they did not want to leave any money on the table, so she expected to have enough money to do a round three of funding.*

Vice Chair Powell asked why the Econo Lodge building was empty. *Mrs. Desiderio said it was due to the timing of when the funding was given versus when they were allowed to house residents in the hotels. County Manager Diorio said FEMA was giving pushback because they only wanted to pay when beds were filled, not the hotel as a whole.*

Vice Chair Powell said she was concerned about the pace of spending for the Smithville Community Coalition, she did not want them to lose funding. *Mrs. Neely said the Smithville project was delayed because they needed them to formalize their final plan before funding was approved. She said that based on the purchases they had made; they were on track with their spending. Mr. Bryant said to look at the dashboard explanations and it would detail why particular projects had spending delays.*

Vice Chair Powell asked why the park's funded spending was so minimal. *Mrs. Neely said the reason was due to design firms and construction firms formalizing the contracts, but construction had not started on the parks. Mr. Bryant said not to refer to actual spending as an indication of how projects were moving along, planning was still happening, but expenses had not hit yet. Mrs. Neely said the Parks funding was capital funds and they had till 2026 to spend those amounts of money.*

Commissioner Altman said the fund spending being done was an example of a well-run government.

Commissioner Griffin said it was phenomenal to see the level of transparency and the impact funding would have on all taxpayers and residents of Mecklenburg County.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell said the level of detail and utilizing every dollar was great to see. She said the staff that worked on this funding needed to be recognized for all their work.

Commissioner Leake thanked County Manager Diorio for her previous experience before becoming County Manager which helped her do the work she was doing now. She said she was concerned for the Roof Above shelter, and Loaves and Fishes organizations. She said they needed resources to continue to serve the community.

Commissioner Leake asked what funding had been provided to Title 1 schools. *Mr. Bryant said they were funding non-profit organizations that supported Title 1 schools, and those*

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*organizations would be monitored to see the progress they had.*

Commissioner Jerrell said the dashboard was phenomenal. He thanked Mrs. Williams for her fantastic work in assisting in creating the dashboard. He asked how frequently the information was shared and the dashboard updated. *Mrs. Neely said the information was updated monthly.*

Commissioner Altman asked when the dashboard was going to go live. *Mrs. Neely said the link would be available the next day and there would be a link on the website. County Manager Diorio said the link would be sent to the Board once it went live.*

Chair Dunlap said he wanted to thank everyone responsible for making the presentation and the funding programs that had been presented. He said it was a lot to understand and was thankful to have staff who understood it well.

### **MECK Pre-K**

Chair Dunlap recognized Tim Gibbons, Early Childhood Education Initiative Program Manager who gave an update on MECK Pre-K.

### **Comments**

Commissioner Cotham thanked Mr. Gibbons for the presentation and thanked previous Commissioner Trevor Fuller for starting the efforts of the program being discussed. She asked why was reading metrics not specifically labeled in the presentation. *Mr. Gibbons said the pre-k children were learning pre-reading skills and that's why the information was labeled in the way it was.* Commissioner Cotham asked if the children started reading in Kindergarten. *Mr. Gibbons said he could not specifically speak to CMS curriculums, but the children were learning concepts of print, how book reading worked, and book interactions.*

Commissioner Cotham suggested having a cheat sheet to make the information more relatable for parents to understand. *Mr. Gibbons said the information shared with parents was broken down for them to comprehend.*

Commissioner Meier asked was the data shared in the benchmark goals for the literacy programs being discussed. *Mr. Gibbons said curriculum data, and literacy screener data were being gathered to be used for comparison across programs.*

Commissioner Meier asked when they would see the first class of graduates for the program in



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5<sup>th</sup> grade. *Mr. Gibbons said the program had started pre-COVID but had been derailed. He said the program had re-started this year, and they would see the first cohort currently in Meck PreK classrooms. He said it would be 10 years from now to have a final report.*

Commissioner Meier asked if the children that started pre-COVID were being tracked. *Mr. Gibbons said they were not being tracked, due to disruption from COVID there were a lot of concerns about the validity of data especially due to shutdowns and virtual learning.*

Commissioner Meier asked if the work being done with the University of North Carolina and CPCC for the Bilingual educator program was part of the pipeline for workforce development goals. *County Manager Diorio said that program was started before workforce development became a Board priority, and the money being used for the program was privately raised. She asked what County Manager Diorio meant by the money being privately raised. County Manager Diorio said it was donated through corporate raised funding.*

Commissioner Leake thanked Mr. Gibbons for his presentation and asked if he had worked with the CMS school system. *Mr. Gibbons said he did not work with CMS, he did teach in Louisville, Kentucky, and Denver, Colorado.*

Commissioner Leake said she also wanted to recognize Commissioner Fuller for previously bringing the information to the Board about the program being discussed.

Commissioner Leake asked if the data results of the program being discussed would be available in 10 years. *Mr. Gibbons said there was an annual report being done every year, in terms of progress, longitude, and evaluation. He said in terms of the overall progress of the program, the final report would be in 10 years.*

Commissioner Griffin asked if CMS had provided the information on Kindergartens and the master connect scores for the cohort. *Mr. Gibbons said that information was in the process of being finalized. He asked if the data on pre-k kids was available for the year 2022. Mr. Gibbons said he would have to go back to CMS and ask their team about it. County Manager Diorio asked if Commissioner Griffin wanted the data on kids that went into kindergarten in the current year. He said yes, that was the data he wanted.*

Vice Chair Powell asked if there had been centers opened in her particular district's deserted area. *Mr. Gibbons said he would have to take a closer look at the geography she was referencing and get back to her with the information at a later time.*

Vice Chair Powell asked if there was only one social worker for 1,800 Pre-K students. *Mr. Gibbons*

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*said they had different levels of support; they did not have just one social worker. He said they had multiple family support specialists, managers, and partnerships with different providers in the community, so it depended on the level of need.*

Commissioner Altman said she was thrilled about the screening being done to catch gaps in kids learning early on. She asked if for the scholarship recipient families, was there an obligation for them to work with Meck Pre-K. *Mr. Gibbons said it was discussed previously that it would be incredibly challenging from a legal perspective to have scholarship recipients mandated employment requirements as a condition of the scholarship.*

Commissioner Altman asked how a parent would decide what program to apply to. *Mr. Gibbons said the eligibility criteria would mainly determine what program the parent would fall under. He said other factors like location, multiple siblings attending a location together, and resources available to the children directly in the center setting determined that choice for parents.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if providers did the same screening as the County did. *Mr. Gibbons said CMS did not do the same screening as providers. He said the screening done was similar to pediatric screening. He said they would want parity across all programs, but there were other overall factors to consider for each program.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if there was demographic information on the teachers coming through the program. *Mr. Gibbons said they did not have data to discuss currently. He said the teachers employed by Meck PreK were not employed by the County or Meck PreK, they were employed at the site that they worked at. He said they could get the information, but it was not readily available. He said anecdotally the teachers of the program were primarily women of color. County Manager Diorio said the educational programs were targeting the employees who worked at the centers, that way it targeted employees that wanted to go into teaching jobs. Mr. Gibbons said CPCC recruited program participants from daycare centers. He said they had amazing stories of teachers that joined the educational program and were in the workforce pipeline.*

Chair Dunlap recognized Stephanie Sneed, CMS school Board Vice Chair who was in attendance in the audience.

Commissioner Jerrell asked for Mr. Gibbons to clarify the data around (Socioeconomic status) SES status and the child's ability to achieve higher levels regardless of that SES status. *Mr. Gibbons said it was correct, kids could achieve higher levels regardless of SES status.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked what the capacity was for the Strive program. *Mr. Gibbons said the*

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*figures provided were the targeted capacity.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked if all the programs were at capacity. *Mr. Gibbons said the CPMC program was at capacity, but the program at UNCC was not.*

***The Board took a break at 3:10 p.m. and returned at 3:20 p.m.***

### **Environmental Leadership**

Chair Dunlap recognized Erin Stanforth, Resiliency Manager who gave an update on the Environmental Leadership Action Plan.

### **Comments**

Commissioner Cotham asked where the electrical cars were purchased. *Mrs. Stanforth said she knew they were purchased through a government purchasing contract, and they were shipped to a dealership in Winston-Salem.*

Commissioner Cotham asked to have data sent to her regarding land purchases and the increased amounts over the years. *Mrs. Stanforth said she would send her the information at a later time.* Commissioner Jerrell asked if additional resources were requested to maintain the other areas while simultaneously being at Evergreen. *Mrs. Stanforth said they had requested the same amount of money for the current fiscal year as last year for invasives. She said it was not necessarily prescribed where funding was utilized.*

Commissioner Meier asked if the work done around invasives was contracted work. *Mrs. Stanforth said it was a combination of labored contract work, and work through the County.*

Commissioner Meier asked how many staff members were on the land acquisition team. *Mrs. Stanforth said it was one or two staff members from what she could recall. County Manager Diorio said there were more staff members, but there were a lot of vacancies in that department. Mr. Ramos gave descriptions of the current hiring patterns in the land acquisition department.*

Commissioner Meier asked how much was allotted for land acquisition for fiscal year 2023. *County Manager Diorio said \$50 Million was allotted.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked about previous amounts of money approved being carried over for land acquisition. *County Manager Diorio provided figures on the numbers asked.*

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*Mr. Cox provided historical figures on the money allocated to land acquisition.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked would there be environmental justice engagement events done in the future. *Mrs. Stanforth said there would be future engagements. She said engagement responses were low and they were going to do more engagements to gather responses, and the data would look differently.*

Vice Chair Powell said she agreed with Commissioner Jerrell and his perspective of invasive species. She said if additional funding was needed, she agreed in doing so. She asked Mr. Ramos what the staff numbers in the real estate department were. *Mr. Ramos said there was a total of 7 positions, 3 were filled, 2 of those were recently filled, and 3 were being actively recruited.* She asked if there was a strategy to hire a consultant. *Mr. Ramos said they were intending to utilize a consultant to help with greenway preliminary work. She asked if there was additional funding needed or would lap salaries cover the consultant position. Mr. Ramos said they did not need additional funding for the consultant.*

Commissioner Powell thanked all the committees associated with invasive species and land acquisition for their work and involvement.

Commissioner Altman said it was an honor to serve on the environmental stewardship committee. She said there was a judiciary and moral responsibility to engage in the work and spend resources to do the work. She asked if the whole amount allocated during the last two years was committed to be spent. *Mrs. Stanforth said yes that was correct, with the caveat that an offer submitted or under negotiations tended to take quite a while.*

Commissioner Altman asked when the Board would get briefings on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) project list. *County Manager Diorio said it would be coming up at a future Public Policy workshop.*

Commissioner Leake discussed junked yards in her district and how they had increased over time. She asked how much an electric vehicle costs. *Mrs. Stanforth said each was roughly about \$48,000.*

Commissioner Leake asked what the map included in the presentation showed. *Mrs. Stanforth said the map highlighted land acquisition and money spent to acquire the land for FY2021, FY 2022, and future purchases for FY2023.*

Chair Dunlap said environmental justice was something that everyone had to do, and the marketing should be changed to get everyone involved. He said while staffing departments fully

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when it came to land acquisition was important, the current staff was still able to get the work done, and that needed to be highlighted.

### **Affordable Housing**

Chair Dunlap recognized Elyse Dashew, Chair of the Board, CMS in the audience.

Chair Dunlap recognized LaShonda Hart, Affordable Housing Program Manager who gave an update on Mecklenburg County's Affordable Housing programs.

### **Comments**

Commissioner Jerrell asked if the figure of \$3.8 Million included direct subsidies that the County funded. *Mrs. Hart said yes, it included rental subsidies to the programs she outlined in her presentation. She clarified that for the supportive services program that was a different amount concerning emergency assistance. She said she could provide that information to him directly at a later time.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked how residents were able to access all the different rental subsidy programs. *Mrs. Hart said that the supportive services programs were handled by community support services, through a process called coordinated entry.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked if grant funding was going to be increased for the HOMES program. *County Manager Diorio said there would need to be a conversation on that, to expand the program based on the reevaluation figures as part of the budget process.*

Commissioner Leake said she was excited about the presentation. She said she was excited to see the rehabilitation projects done in the residents' homes in her district. She said Mrs. Hart was doing an excellent job and she appreciated all her work. She thanked Commissioner Jerrell for his support of the programs that affected her district as well.

Commissioner Griffin said housing was very critical for the County, and he was very pleased with Mrs. Hart's presentation. He said over \$60 Million being made in housing investments was phenomenal. He asked if there was any funding that could be provided for the Magnolia apartment residents. *County Manager Diorio said the City had engaged the Crisis Assistance Ministry to work with those seniors to find out how they could support them, and move them into more permanent housing. She said there was a conference call where they would discuss if the County was able to assist and participate in any way.*

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Commissioner Altman said it was important for her that the County help fund the Legal Aid program and the Charlotte Center for Advocacy program because they were helping prevent abuses in the marketplace, and they helped ensure that nobody was unlawfully evicted from their house. She asked how much had been invested to support the work of those two organizations. *Mr. Cox said there was \$408,000 for Legal advocacy and \$809,000 for Legal aid allocated in the operating budget.*

Commissioner Altman asked what the money given to the Smithville community went towards. *Mrs. Hart said it would go towards land acquisition.* She asked if it would go to funding the construction of 20 properties. *Mrs. Hart said once they received the funds for land acquisition, that would help them get with developers and start bid building and also fundraise.*

Commissioner Altman asked what was going on with the 7<sup>th</sup> and Tryon project. *County Manager Diorio said they were still trying to advance the project, and that's all she could share without going into a closed session.*

Vice Chair Powell thanked Mrs. Hart for her presentation. She asked when someone went to Salvation Army, and a rental subsidy was provided was there a time limit. *Mrs. Hart said those programs were two years in length. She said residents came in to get help, establish stability, get the services they needed, and have a successful exit plan once the support services stopped. She explained that unsuccessful exits occurred when the residents left the program unannounced or did not adhere to the rules of the program.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked based on the funding being provided for Legal aid was there a need for more funding. *Mrs. Hart said the County in 2021 provided funding for them to hire more staff and additional attorneys because of the projected work that would increase. She said they had not evaluated if additional staff was needed. She said she would provide additional information on the subject directly to her at a later time.*

Commissioner Meier said Mrs. Hart was a rockstar, she was thankful for all the leadership and organization she provided to the programs she was in charge of. She said she was in support of ramping up the Budget for the program in support to offer additional support.

Chair Dunlap thanked Mrs. Hart for her presentation. He said a benchmark could be set based on the current numbers of rehab units and affordable housing. He said this could set the benchmark for measuring the growth, and impact the programs were having.

Commissioner Cotham thanked Mrs. Hart, and County Manager Diorio for appointing Mrs. Hart

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to her current role. She said housing was very complex and had many different tentacles. She said Mrs. Hart was able to wrap her arms around the programs which made it much easier.

Chair Dunlap said he was leaving the meeting and was passing the gavel to Vice Chair Powell.

County Manager Diorio gave a wrap-up of day two of the Retreat.

Motion was made by Commissioner Meier, seconded by Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell, carried 5-3, with Commissioners Griffin, Jerrell, Leake, Meier, and Rodriguez-McDowell voting yes, and Commissioner Altman, Cotham, and Powell, voting no, to amend the meeting agenda and move the final presentation of day 2 to day 3.

**Recess**

Motion was made by Commissioner Meier, seconded by Commissioner Altman to recess the meeting until the following day.

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**RETREAT – DAY 3**

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met for the FY 2023 Annual Retreat on Friday, January 27, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. in the Harris Conference Center at Central Piedmont Community College, 3216 CPCC Harris Campus Drive, Charlotte, NC.

**Present:** Chair George Dunlap and Vice Chair Elaine Powell  
Commissioners Leigh Altman, Patricia “Pat” Cotham,  
Arthur Griffin, Mark Jerrell, Vilma D. Leake, Laura J Meier,  
and Susan Rodriguez-McDowell  
County Manager Dena R. Diorio  
County Attorney Tyrone C. Wade  
Deputy Clerk to the Board Arlissa Eason

**Absent:** Clerk to the Board Kristine M. Smith

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dunlap followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**Welcome**

Chair Dunlap welcomed everyone and made references to the changes that occurred on the agenda on day two, and how the last presentation would be presented later on day three.

Chair Dunlap recognized Dena Diorio, County Manager who provided introductory remarks for day three of the Board Retreat.

**Mecklenburg EMS Agency (MEDIC)**

County Manager Diorio recognized Derrick Ramos, Deputy County Manager/Chief of Staff who made a briefing on various topics and gave an overview of County funding for Medic. Mr. Ramos welcomed JP Peterson, Medic Director who would be presenting as well.



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### Comments

Commissioner Altman asked if Mr. Peterson could provide a success analysis pre/post-COVID as it related to morbidity and mortality and the recommended changes. *Mr. Peterson said he should be able to do that. He said the challenge right now was pre/post-COVID morbidity had reduced cardiac arrest in Mecklenburg County. He said he could benchmark from the current year moving forward and provide the analysis based on those figures.*

Commissioner Altman asked Mr. Peterson referencing District 1 having greater challenges if he could speak to those challenges. *Mr. Peterson said the north side of District 1 had challenges with transportation of moving patients from one area to the hospital they needed to go to. He said there's been a challenge with staffing and having enough ambulances to transport patients. He said as they got staffing levels up, those challenges would be alleviated. She asked what the plan was in the interim. Mr. Peterson said they would use the response configuration plan while the staffing levels were addressed.*

Commissioner Leake gave different scenarios of occurrences in the community, and how MEDIC responded in assisting the residents. She asked how MEDIC transportation expenses could be subsidized for those residents that needed transport but were not able to afford it. *Mr. Peterson said part of the County subsidy helped provide charity care. He said that was utilized for patients that needed services but could not afford to pay. He said in the last year they assisted with \$4.5 Million in assistance through charity care at MEDIC for the community. She asked to have the data provided that showed the zip codes of where the assistance had been given. Mr. Peterson said he could provide that data directly to her at a later time.*

Commissioner Griffin said he was interested in the follow-up presentation Mr. Peterson had mentioned as it related to the response configuration and the Extraterritorial Jurisdictions (ETJ).

Vice Chair Powell asked if they had received any requests to add or re-configure the zones. *Mr. Peterson said yes there was discussion around it. He said there was a planned presentation for their Agency Board of Commissioners, and based on that meeting they would move forward with a decision.*

Vice Chair Powell asked how many job vacancies were EMTs and how many were Paramedics. *Mr. Peterson said 41 were Paramedics, and 28 were EMTs.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if there was a difference in states relating to Medicaid expansion, did hospital systems have a greater responsibility, and what was the state rules related to MEDIC. *Mr. Peterson said concerning state rule and Medicaid expansion he would have*

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*to look into the information and get back to her at a later time. He said regarding hospitals they did play a critical role. He said from an EMS perspective when a hospital was busy and backed up, they were backed up as well. He said every minute an ambulance waited with a patient to be admitted, it took away from assisting another resident in the community. He said there was a responsibility as a team to work through challenges with hospitals. He said at the state level, they were actively involved. He said there were upcoming meetings where they would discuss and learn legislative changes, and what they could do differently at the state level to improve, and make EMS better.*

Commissioner Meier asked to be explained the first responders funding as it related to City and town ETJs. *Mr. Peterson said all the funding she referred to was paid by MEDIC to each individual fire service department. County Manager Diorio said they provided a subsidy to MEDIC of \$20 Million, and the rest of their budget came from insurance reimbursement and other things.*

Commissioner Jerrell said he was excited about the CPCC partnership. He asked if that partnership would be assisting in the vacancies they had. *Mr. Peterson said yes, that would help cover the vacancies, and it allowed them to add more Basic Life Support ambulances into the 911 system.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked why equity was not applied based on the volume of calls as it related to the subsidy. *Mr. Peterson said it came down to the size of the department and the number of calls. He said he agreed that there could be an interpretation for change, but he did not know why it was set up the current way as the subsidy amount was set up a long time back.*

Chair Dunlap said the County subsidized the fire departments that were discussed in the presentation. He said MEDIC took their funding and added to the subsidy funding. He said in his opinion he thought there was some fundamental unfairness going on. He said if you looked at it from equity lens view it was not proportioned correctly, and if you lived in an incorporated area, you paid a subsidy that others were not necessarily paying. He said that was unfair taxation. *County Manager Diorio said she did not agree or disagree. She said the current subsidy model was set up 25 years ago based on primarily volunteered fire departments, not on paid fire services.*

### **Opioid Settlement Funding Plan**

Chair Dunlap recognized Dena Diorio, County Manager who gave information on the County's Opioid Settlement funding plan.

### **Comments**

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Commissioner Meier asked if the presented information addressed the needs of those who could use a subsidy, but it did not fully cover services. *County Manager Diorio said the proposed plan would help those underinsured.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked if County Manager Diorio could talk more about the support high school model. *County Manager Diorio said during a previous meeting there was attendance from staff and parents of Emerald School of Excellence. She said they did a nice job talking about the work they did as a recovery school with students that were recovering from substance abuse disorders. She said the school provided them with a lot of support that allowed them to stay clean and continue their education. She said she wanted to understand more of what they were doing because she thought their work would fall under the recovery support bucket of strategies.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked if the funding allowed for any support for families. *County Manager Diorio said yes it did, all the strategies were holistic regarding assisting families. She said the memorandum of agreement (MOA) was specific, so they had to make sure to comply with those provisions because it was pretty strict.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if the proposal was in part ARPA funds. *County Manager Diorio said it was going to be similar, but she suggested more vetting on the front end to make sure the investment was made into organizations that had a track record of being successful.*

Chair Dunlap asked what the difference was between someone who died versus someone who overdosed as it related to the data presented. *County Manager Diorio said not everyone that died was from an overdose, anyone could die, and the cause could not relate to an illicit drug.*

Commissioner Leake said the presentation reminded her of the '70s and 80's era and the drug epidemic back then. She asked where the greatest problem of drugs in the country was. *County Manager Diorio said there were certain parts of the state and the country that had much higher rates. She said Cabarrus County had higher rates than Mecklenburg County. She said Ohio and West Virginia were states adversely impacted by the drug problem. She said North Carolina was not among the worst in the country, and money was allocated based on the drug statistics each state had.*

Commissioner Leake asked if the statistics in North Carolina were not at a national level why did the County take on in the process of the settlement. *County Manager Diorio said they were included in the process because it was a National settlement and every state in the country was eligible to receive money from the settlement.*

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### **Property Revaluation**

Chair Dunlap recognized Ken Joyner, County Assessor, and Adrian Cox, Budget Director who gave an update on the County's property revaluation.

### **Comments**

Commissioner Griffin said the explanations Mr. Cox provided helped him understand the information being presented. He asked if some of the years that saw a higher impact of re-evaluation were due to gentrification and condominiums versus subdivisions being built. *Mr. Joyner said when they evaluated in a mass appraisal, they were required to put properties within like properties, looking at neighborhoods, market transactions in a particular area, and use those that were similar areas that had not sold for comparison.*

Chair Dunlap discussed the notion of revenue neutrality that County Manager Diorio mentioned, and how the bond referendum was impacted by a revenue-neutral approach.

Commissioner Leake said she was concerned with information as it related to senior citizens. She said Mr. Joyner had done a good job of working with the residents to help them understand the tax process, but for the residents in her district, the clarity and understanding of the tax information numbers were not there. She thanked Mr. Joyner, and Mr. Cox for providing a presentation that she understood the explanations, and hoped that the media would generate the same information out to the community for the residents to understand it as well.

Commissioner McDowell asked for clarification on the values of homes at the lowest-rated prices, and how their taxes would be impacted. *Mr. Joyner said for all the homes in the lower third rate, their overall rate change would be 89% for those homes. County Manager Diorio said that homes that had the lowest values in the county, had the highest increase in their value because of where they were located.*

Commissioner Cotham said the information being presented was complicated, especially for new Board members. She thanked Mr. Joyner for all the education he had done over the years to educate groups on the tax processes. She said the tax values going up for homes would affect renters. She said it would be helpful for future presented information to provide examples of what was at stake when lowering the tax rate versus the tax rate increasing as it related to how it would affect services.

Chair Dunlap and Mr. Joyner had a discussion on the effects of gentrification in particular neighborhoods and how tax values differ, and the various programs that assisted senior citizens

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pay their tax bills in the community.

Commissioner Jerrell thanked Mr. Cox for taking a complex issue like revaluation and breaking it down into where the information could be palatable. He thanked Mr. Joyner and his team for being out in the community and answering questions related to the complexity of the revaluation process. He asked if Mr. Cox could go over the distribution of impacted residential property figures presented. *Mr. Cox discussed figures related to the averages of properties, factors in that average, and how the revaluation process affected them.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked Mr. Joyner if the maps that were provided back in 2019 provided information on income distribution. *Mr. Joyner said the work done with the Charlotte Observer is where they were able to pull those numbers from. He said since then they had moved to a census block from the heat map. Mr. Cox said that was information that could be provided based on what the latest census block data provided.*

Commissioner Meier said she agreed with Commissioner Cotham regarding having future presentations that told what would be gained and lost based on the increase/decrease of a revenue-neutral strategy. *County Manager Diorio said the information could be presented based on dollar amounts, and it would be hypothetical information. She said the Board would ultimately have to decide where the cuts would be made.*

Commissioner Altman said the Board was concerned that the leap in values was going to harm the most economically fragile in the community. She said no one wanted homeowners to be at risk of not paying their property tax bills, and lose their homes. She asked if there was a partnership that could be done with a non-profit to provide loans at low rates for residents to pay the tax bill. *County Manager Diorio said they would have to look at the idea and see what could be done. She said someone would have to provide the equity for a non-profit to be able to make those loans. She said the senior population would be very apprehensive about taking on debt.*

*Mr. Joyner discussed the Circuit breaker program were based on income; taxes got delayed until the property was sold.*

Commissioner Griffin said the implications in the next decade of all the County deals and programs that came to the County had to be considered as it related to seniors and the residents that lived in the community. He said there had to be conscious thinking and awareness based on the implications of future growth.

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### Board Priorities and Initiatives Survey

Chair Dunlap recognized Adrian Cox, Budget Director who gave an update on the remaining Board Budget Priority investments and a summary of the work underway in the County.

### Comments

Chair Dunlap said this was an overall summary of how the money was being spent. He said amounts were greater in one area versus another. He said there was going to have to be a discussion to determine what was valuable, and what was most important, as issues like health care, housing, and childcare continued to escalate.

Commissioner Cotham said it would be helpful to discuss what the money being spent resulted in. *County Manager Diorio said they heard a presentation earlier in the week that talked about performance metrics and what was being done in some areas. She said some of the spending in some areas was relatively new and it could not be measured. She said dashboards and data were being collected that would be used to show the information that provided insight into the impact that was being made.*

Commissioner Cotham said the public needed to know what was working, and what was not. She said it was not just about spending money, it was also about what was being received back from that spending. *County Manager Diorio said that was great feedback and they would try to put data together across all programs and funding sources that showed the impact that was happening.*

Commissioner Griffin said he was engaged in the work because they had talked about upward mobility for a decade or more and he did not see it in Mecklenburg County. He said he saw bits and pieces, but systematically in terms of leading opportunities for career readiness, or housing he did not. He said his reference was for the community as a whole from Davison to Mint Hill in terms of what upward mobility looked like in particular the areas of educational attainment, Meck PreK, and Childcare. He said it was a judiciary's responsibility to move in the same direction as other government partners to get the community a return on their tax dollar investments.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell said that when looking at partnerships and the investments being made, they had to be viewed across the board. She said you could not get a return on investment if the investment was not being made. She said education was critically underfunded and when there was a partner that had been critically underfunded for years the Board had a responsibility to make an impact.

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Chair Dunlap said before a discussion on spending on education occurred, how much was being spent in particular areas, there had been no indication whether they should or should not spend money in a particular area or not. He said everyone agreed that education was of utmost importance. He said the disagreement was not to give more funding in education but rather whose responsibility it was, whether it was the State or the County.

Commissioner Griffin gave practical examples and facts about instances as it related to education it was not about money, there were other factors for the lack of achievement gaps. He said he was ready to discuss how they could be more effective with the resources they already had. He said he was in agreement to provide more funding to the school district. He said his life's work was in the school system. He wanted CMS to be the best school district in America and would do everything to make that happen, but the responsibility was on the State, the County, and the Board of education.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked Chair Dunlap when it would be the proper time to have a discussion as it related to CMS and funding. She said it was really important to have the conversation and there were fundamental items that needed to be talked about. *Chair Dunlap said while it was good to talk about those fundamental differences none of them would change the conversation. He said the presentation demonstrated upfront how the dollars were spent. He said there would be a time to have the conversation, but did not know if there would be a difference in philosophical changes once that conversation occurred. He said the conversation happened every year at budget time.*

Commissioner Leake thanked Commissioner Griffin for being a warrior with many others as it related to education. She said the money was not the problem and the newly elected school board members reflected that the community wanted change. She said education was more than money. She said no one was degrading anyone, everyone was simply pleading for the right thing to be done at the right time for the right people. She said CMS needed to be accountable for how they spent the money the County funded them. She said the County gave CMS more money than anyone else in the County.

Chair Dunlap said he wanted to say again that there was a new Board of Education who expressed an interest in working with the Board. He asked that the Board allow them to present what it was that they intended to do with the resources that the County gave them.

### **BREAK FOR WORKING LUNCH**

***The Board took a break at 12:05 p.m. and returned at 12:20 p.m.***

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### *Financial Update*

Chair Dunlap recognized David Boyd, Chief Financial Officer who gave an update on the FY2022 financial results, FY2023 projections, and revenue estimates for FY2024.

### Comments

Chair Dunlap asked if the Board wanted to decide on Fund Balance accumulating at a different rate, would the current meeting be the one that decision could be made. *County Manager Diorio said the rate that was set was 28% and that did not generate Fund balance. She said what generated Fund Balance was underspending. She said the Fund balance surplus had to do with vacancies and salaries.*

Chair Dunlap asked how the budget would be impacted in the event of inflation or a recession. *Mr. Boyd said in the revenue side they had already factored in what they believed what impact of the recession would be, they had not established the spending side of the budget yet, and that increasing costs in spending would be part of the conversation as they set the spending side of the budget.*

Chair Dunlap asked what tax amount was generated from online sales. *Mr. Boyd said the data provided by the Department of Revenue was extremely difficult to get. He said they had not been able to identify the specific amounts.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked to be explained how the 28% figure as it related to Fund balance came about. *Mr. Boyd said in 2022 the year ended at a 35% figure. He said he could not do the figures on the fly, but would let her know at a later time.* She said she was interested in knowing those numbers. She said the Fund balance generated was huge, and there had to be a better job of not creating such a large balance. *County Manager Diorio said a lot of the excess being generated was due to vacancies and underspending.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked if the 28% figure established by a previous Board was the result of the Bond rating, trying to prepare for catastrophe issues, or was it a combination of both. *Mr. Boyd said he was not there when the policy was established, but it was very consistent with policies across the Board for other Counties. County Manager Diorio said she was with the Board when the 28% figure was adopted. She said it was done to make sure there was money for catastrophic incidents as when she joined the Board there was no Fund balance.*

Commissioner Jerrell continued the discussion with County Manager Diorio, and Mr. Troutman



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as it related to Fund balance, positions, and division expenses that were being covered.

Commissioner Cotham asked if vacancies that were longer than six months were looked at to see if they still needed to be filled. *County Manager Diorio said yes, departments were asked if they still needed the position, and if not, those positions were then eliminated.*

Commissioner Cotham asked for data as it related to vacancies being open for a particular period and then being eliminated. *County Manager Diorio said she could get that data to her at a later time.*

Commissioner Cotham asked if the sales tax delay being three months, was consistent nationwide. *Mr. Boyd said no, the delay was particular to North Carolina.*

Commissioner Cotham asked if there had been legislative efforts to change the sales tax delay. *Mr. Boyd said he was not aware of legislative efforts, but he was aware of folks at the North Carolina Government Finance Officers Association starting to increase their advocacy efforts in working with the treasurer's office on issues as such.*

Mr. Trotman said mental health resources were offered to staff, and two wellness days were approved by the Board to address the staff's mental health and life wellness balance.

Commissioner Cotham asked if they ever looked at two nurses sharing a job. *Mr. Trotman said they were looking at different strategies for nurses and looking at providing certifications to bring additional staff to support nurses.*

Commissioner Altman asked if reducing the number of vacancies and doubling the starting salary could increase the workforce figures and reduce the number of vacancies. *Mr. Trotman said they did not budget 100% of the salaries. County Manager Diorio said HR did benchmarks, but the bigger issue was staff supply.*

Commissioner Altman asked if the prediction of sales tax being flat for the next year was due to being conservative, or due to a possible recession. *Mr. Boyd said she was correct, there was a lot of uncertainty about where things were headed at the end of 2023, and the projections on sales tax reflected that.*

Commissioner Altman asked if the Fund balance had increased by \$11 Million. *Mr. Boyd said the fund balance had gone down by \$40 Million.*

Commissioner Griffin asked had the County tried to ask for a different distribution of the sales

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tax locally. *Mr. Boyd explained the process of tax refunds as they related to a company. He said he could get data that showed what percentage of the sales tax was given to the County and the City. Commissioner Griffin said he would like those figures. He said it seemed unfair for services to be provided locally, and not be able to have the majority of the sales taxes or revenue to be coming back from the state.*

Commissioner Meier asked if the vacancies were budgeted for. *Mr. Cox said they looked at the typical vacancy rate and the typical fill rate pre-pandemic and budgeted the salaries at those calculations.*

Chair Dunlap said to keep in mind that just because historically there had been vacancies that would not always be the case as the goal was to have them filled.

Commissioner Leake asked if sales tax was collected on orders from Amazon. *Mr. Boyd said yes, they started collecting sales tax back in 2019 from them.*

### **Capital Improvement Plan**

Chair Dunlap recognized David Boyd, Chief Financial Officer who gave an update on the FY2024-FY2028 Capital Improvement Plan.

### **Comments**

Chair Dunlap asked what would happen when five-year projections crossed over revaluation years. *Mr. Boyd said the projections being made were revenue-neutral, and adjustments would be made to account for changes.*

Commissioner Griffin asked if there was an addition for general obligation bonds would the suggestion be to go to a referendum. *Mr. Boyd said the current CIP plan would let him know when it was the time to do as such, so they would plan in advance.*

Commissioner Altman asked if it was typical for the CIP that ran from 2019 to 2023 not to be completed until 2026. *Mr. Boyd said yes, that was correct. He said projects took a while to get done, especially the ones that started at the end of a particular period in the year.*

Commissioner Altman asked if the Parks and Recreation division got input from their advisory board on CIP projects. *Mrs. Johnson said the County's current process as it related to the CIP process was for the assigned advisory boards to look across all submissions, not just one*

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*department. She said the staff submissions were based on the Meck Playbook which included resident input, and park and recreation advisory board input for making the selection of which projects to be considered.*

Commissioner Altman asked what was the \$10 Million for land acquisition set aside for. *Mr. Boyd said he wanted to make sure there was money allocated in the CIP for future land acquisition, so the funds set aside were a placeholder for that.*

Chair Dunlap asked when a funded project was completed below the requested funds, and where the remaining funds go to. *Mr. Boyd said as it related to bond funds and CMS the funds had to be used for school projects, so the remaining funds would be transferred to other school projects.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked why other Counties were able to get smaller 2-year bond funding. *Mr. Boyd said different Counties had different practices in terms of how frequently they got bonds and the amount of the bond. County Manager Diorio said it was the Board's decision how many times Bond fund voting was put in the ballots by formally asking to do so.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked for an explanation as it related to equity and how each district was having projects assigned. *Mr. Boyd said there was no intent to have the exact number of projects and dollar amounts across all districts. He said there were projects in particular areas that were larger and required more funding, versus smaller projects in other district areas. He said the CIP projects were based on where there was need, and where that need had to be filled, rather than making sure there was equal amount in every district being dispersed. He said there was the intent to have CIP projects across the County particularly in the Park and Recreation division to make sure there was a significant geographic dispersion.*

Commissioner Jerrell said the presentation was excellent and it was easy to follow. He asked if there was engagement being requested from the community to educate them on tax increases and why they were done. *County Manager Diorio said that was a great point. She said in the last CIP there was no tax increase. She said in the 17 years she had been there; this was the first time a tax increase was happening for CIP projects, and that was a function of how expensive everything had gotten. She said it needed to be figured out how to normalize the tax information as it related to increases to fund CIP projects and get the information out to the public so they would understand the potential implications.*

Vice Chair Powell asked if the funding discussed in the CIP presentation was the maximum that could be spent. *Mr. Boyd said it was a zero-sum game, if something was off the non-CMS list, then something could be added to the CMS list.*

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*The Board took a break and returned at 2:30 p.m.*

### **Priority Setting**

Chair Dunlap said he had heard feedback from the Board that they liked the current priorities that were set. He said he had heard the previous day that County Manager Diorio had suggested moving the Pre-K priority out, and perhaps fund something else. *County Manager Diorio said what she had suggested was for the Board to consider instead of looking at Pre-K which was 4-year-olds, to look at pre-natal to pre-K which was prenatal to 3-year-olds. She said that would expand that priority to be broader.* Chair Dunlap asked if they would not be replacing the program as he understood, they would just be changing the focus of the program. *County Manager Diorio said that was correct.*

Chair Dunlap recognized Meagan Palmer, the Facilitator who engaged the Board in a facilitated priority-setting exercise.

### **FY2024 Budget Preparation**

Chair Dunlap recognized Adrian Cox, Budget Director who gave a briefing on the FY2024 operating budget calendar and public policy workshop agenda.

### **Comments**

Chair Dunlap said he heard feedback from Board Colleagues that there was supposed to have been an agenda discussion on the digital divide. He said he would hate to have a recommendation come forth in the Budget without discussing it first. He said a discussion needed to be included in a work session before a Budget recommendation.

Mr. Cox gave closing remarks and thanked everyone who assisted in working on presentations and all the Board Retreat preparations to make it a success.

### **Closing Comments**

Chair Dunlap recognized Dena Diorio, County Manager who gave the Board closing remarks.

Chair Dunlap thanked everyone involved in supporting the Board Retreat and all the work that

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had been accomplished in the past 3 days.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell that there be no further business to come before the Board that the meeting be adjourned at 3:37 p.m.

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Arlissa Eason, Deputy Clerk to the Board

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George Dunlap, Chair