

Meeting Minutes
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RETREAT DAY 1

Due to the State of North Carolina's Declaration of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and per NCGS § 166A-19.24, the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners conducted a remote meeting using the WebEx application.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met remotely for the annual retreat on Wednesday, January 27, 2021 at 8:02 a.m. with Chair Dunlap presiding.

Present: Commissioner Leigh Altman
Commissioner Patricia "Pat" Cotham
Commissioner George Dunlap
Commissioner Mark Jerrell
Commissioner Vilma D. Leake
Commissioner Laura Meier
Commissioner Elaine Powell
Commissioner Susan Rodriguez-McDowell
Commissioner Ella B. Scarborough

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Dunlap led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

COUNTY MANAGER'S INTRODUCTION

Dena Diorio, County Manager, welcomed the Board to day one of the retreat and reviewed the day's agenda.

AGENDA OVERVIEW & BINDER MATERIALS

Adrian Cox, Management & Budget Director, provided an overview of the retreat agenda and binder materials. He mentioned that there was a change to the presenter of the County's Financial Outlook, as the Finance Director would be unavailable.

FY2020 COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT (CAFR)

Michael Bryant, Deputy County Manager, provided an update on the FY2020 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, which included an overall summary of FY2020; a highlight of the general fund and debt service fund; discussion of County investments

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and debt; and a comparison of how the County compares to jurisdictions within the State and the region.

Mr. Bryant answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Michael Simmons, Economist, provided the Board with an economic-outlook update.

Mr. Simmons answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

FY2021 FINANCIAL STATUS & FY2022 PRELIMINARY REVENUE FORECAST

Dena Diorio, County Manager, provided the financial forecast and FY2021 revenue estimate.

Ken Joyner, Tax Assessor, reviewed the key revenue streams: property taxes; sales taxes; and investment income; general fund overall revenues; and debt services fund revenue.

Dena Diorio, County Manager, presented to the Board the FY22 forecast.

Ms. Diorio answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

BUDGET PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Adrian Cox, Management & Budget Director, provided an update on Budget Public Engagement activities, including the results of the budget priority survey.

Mr. Cox answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

RECESS

The Board recessed for a at 10:32 a.m. and reconvened at 10:46 p.m.

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FY2021 SECOND QUARTER UPDATE

Adrian Cox, Management & Budget Director, gave an update on the FY2021 Budget Priorities and second quarter update.

Mr. Cox answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

2021 COMMUNITY PULSE REPORT

Dr. Monica Allen, Strategic Planning & Evaluation Director, gave an overview of the 2021 Community Pulse report.

Dr. Allen answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

LUNCH BREAK

The Board recessed at 12:34 p.m. and reconvened at 1:42 p.m.

EDUCATION

Adrian Cox, Management & Budget Director, provided information on funding for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and discussed options moving forward. He discussed comparisons to other counties, the County's position regarding funding for education, and available options for the Board to influence education policy.

Commissioner Altman rejoined the meeting at 1:43 p.m.

Mr. Cox stated that there had been many comparisons to how different counties fund schools and when comparing to other jurisdictions, be it for education, parks, debt service, or any other service, comparisons should always be viewed with understanding that no two jurisdictions could be compared in a balanced way. He said there were differences in the types of services provided and differences in the communities the Counties serve. This was particularly important in looking at funded-related comparisons. He wanted them to be aware that funding comparisons could sometimes lead to a race to be the most expensive, which did not necessarily mean better services for the residents.

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Mr. Cox showed the Board how Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools compared to other counties in 2020 with regard to teacher supplements; out of 115 school districts in the State, CMS had the highest-average, local, teacher supplement. He showed the Board how Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools compared to other counties in 2020 with regard to expense per pupil. CMS ranked 96 out of 100, with four counties having a higher, per-pupil expense than Mecklenburg County.

Mr. Cox stated that counties were different with the services they provide; Mecklenburg County played a greater role in park and recreation than many other counties and was the only county to fund the position of the courts the way Mecklenburg County did. He said it was important to recognize that property taxes impacted all community sectors and that wealth and poverty were distributed differently in different communities, which was an aspect of funding for education that was not recognized in a recent study that was presented on comparisons on the ability to pay for public school. He reviewed a chart which showed the percent of population by income for Mecklenburg, Orange, and Wake Counties. He said both Orange and Wake Counties had greater percentages of their population at over \$150,000; whereas, Mecklenburg County had a greater percentage around \$25,000 to \$50,000 and \$50,000 to \$80,000 ranges. He said Orange County also came up in the joint meeting with the Board of Education back in December. In order to achieve the per-pupil funding Orange County had, Mecklenburg County would be required to have an additional \$400 million or an additional .21 cents on the tax rate. He said although comparisons could be useful, when they come to funding, they would not necessarily tell the full story.

Mr. Cox stated North Carolina General Statutes provided mixed-funding on the County's responsibility to fund schools; there was a difference with the County's responsibility to fund facilities and the minimum amount which would be paid for operating in the event the County and school system entered into dispute resolution.

Does the County exceed its responsibility to fund the cost of providing educational facilities? Yes - by a lot. What was ultimately enforceable if the County and the school entered into a dispute resolution and an agreement was not reached through mediation? More than just what the County would fund for facilities – under this scenario minimum funding would be based on prior year funding, Average Daily Membership (ADM), and wage inflation.

Dispute Resolution Formula

In the event the Board of Education disputed the operating funding provided by the County and mediation was not successful, this formula would be applied:

- Prior year actuals ÷ Average Daily Members (ADM) + charter school membership
- x (1+ Annual Change in Employment Cost Index for elementary and secondary school workers- FBLs)
- x new year allotted ADM + charter school membership

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- If the calculation has been used for the prior 2 years, then the change in employment cost index was increased by 3%.

Average Daily Membership

- Average daily membership (ADM) – Number of days that a student’s name was on the roll (regardless of being present) divided by days in a school month
 - o Students with 10 consecutive absences were in violation and excluded from membership.
 - o Measure over time was more accurate than enrollment which was a single point-in-time snapshot.
- Initial ADM allotment was set by the State as the higher of the projected, or first two months of the prior year.
- Initial ADM allotment was increased or decreased if it was off by 2% based on first two months.
- The State held school allotments harmless for dropping ADM for FY2021 (H.B.1105).
- Teachers received \$350 bonus in FY2021 (S.B.818).

Average Daily Membership, Cont.

- Charter School membership grew as a percent of combined enrollment
 - o 11% in 2017
 - o 14% today
- Average Daily Membership (ADM) for CMS dropped by -7,396 since last school year
- Charters in Mecklenburg County have increased by 2,896
 - o Net decrease of -4,500
- Private and homeschools may account for some of the missing pupils (tracked annually).
 - o Private: 18,378 in FY2020
 - o Home: 11,148 in FY2020
- Implication for State funding for FY2022 was unknown. He said it was too early to say.

Employee Cost Index for Elementary and Secondary Schools

- Bureau of Labor Statistics economic indicator that measures changes in the cost of employees to employers overtime
- It factors salaries and benefits.
- It was calculated by industry.
 - o 4.5% in FY2008 (2007) was the highest.
 - o 1.3% in FY2012 was the lowest.
 - o 2.9% was FY2021.
 - o 2.8% - 20-year average

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- 2.8% increase to current funding was \$15M.

Estimated Minimum Based on Dispute Resolution Formula

- On average, for 2018 – 2021 the County exceeded the estimate by \$11.3M annually.
- FY2021 ADM approved allotment was likely overstated.
- Estimate for FY2022 would be -\$5M if current trends hold.
 - +\$15M Escalation
 - -\$20M due to ADM
- When ADM returns to normal, cost would increase offsetting any reduction.

Dispute Resolution Caveats

- Untested – Prior to FY2018 litigated disputes were common, but since the statutes were revised, no County has entered dispute resolution which would test the formula.
- Results can be estimated but should be viewed with caution.
 - Final figures could not be known until after June.
 - Small changes in ADM or Employee Cost Index had large impact on results.
- The dispute resolution formula was intended to ensure escalated funding for schools over the prior year unless there was significant reduction in the number of pupils.
- Calculation was based on a single year, regardless of whether funding was over or under the minimum in the prior year.
- More funding in one year would make the minimum threshold higher in future years.

How Much Were We Required to Pay CMS?

County responsibility for facility requirements:

- FY 2018
 - Budget: \$629,201,563
 - Required to Fund for Facility Maintenance & Debt Service: \$313,632,486
 - Difference: \$315,569,077
- FY 2019
 - Budget: \$630,008,412
 - Required to Fund for Facility Maintenance & Debt Service: \$291,410,599
 - Difference: \$338,597,813
- FY 2020
 - Budget: \$690,865,783
 - Required to Fund for Facility Maintenance & Debt Service: \$321,493,524
 - Difference: \$369,372,259
- FY 2021
 - Budget: \$717,259,756

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- Required to Fund for Facility Maintenance & Debt Service: \$333,558,385
- Difference: \$383,701,371

Estimate if county entered into dispute resolution (DR):

- FY 2018
 - Budget: \$629,201,563
 - Total required to fund if DR formula was used for operating: \$628,007,449
 - Difference: \$1,194,114
- FY 2019
 - Budget: \$630,008,412
 - Total required to fund if DR formula was used for operating: \$607,378,380
 - Difference: \$22,630,032
- FY 2020
 - Budget: \$690,865,783
 - Total required to fund if DR formula was used for operating: \$672,199,180
 - Difference: \$18,666,603
- FY 2021
 - Budget: \$717,259,756
 - Total required to fund if DR formula was used for operating: \$714,440,595
 - Difference: \$2,819,162

CMS Fund Balance

- CMS had an unassigned fund balance of \$21M at the end of FY2019.
- State funds revert to the State at the end of the year.
- The Local Government Commission did not prescribe a minimum fund balance for Schools.
- Counties could not make schools appropriate fund balance, but it can be taken into consideration with determining the budget.

Key Takeaways

- The County funds a significant level of operating funding for CMS, outranking most counties in the State on a per-pupil basis.
- Comparisons to other counties did not tell the whole story.
- Enrollments were in a state of fluctuation due to COVID19 and may have an impact on funding for FY2022.
- There was a significant difference between the funding that counties were required to provide for facilities and the minimum that would result from a potential dispute resolution.

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- Because of law changes in 2018, dispute resolutions would result in higher minimums than if the county funded facility requirements alone.
- The County had exceeded both estimates.
- Higher operating funding in prior years increases the minimum that would result from a potential dispute resolution. (Under dispute resolution laws, it was easy to fund operating for schools but harder to reduce.)
- CMS fund balance can be taken into consideration in determining funding.

Options for Influencing Education Policy

Mr. Cox stated that there were several tools the Board could use: restricted contingency; funding formulas; purpose/ function codes; joint technical workgroup; and state involvement.

- Restricted Contingency
 - o Funding was not appropriated to CMS until it was approved by the Board.
 - o Has been utilized to hold new funding until some guarantee can be made regarding the use of funds.
 - o If existing funding was held in restricted contingency, it would be a reduction in funding to CMS until the funds were made available.
 - o The restriction could potentially be unenforceable if a dispute resolution resulted in a higher allocation.
- Funding Formulas
 - o Fifteen counties in FY2020 reported having some form of school funding formula.
 - o Mix of formalized and informal
 - o Often as a starting point
 - o Not always adopted
 - o Typical variables
 - o Percentage of property tax only
 - o Percentage of property and sales tax, and/or other discretionary funding
 - o Based on per-pupil and inflation
- Purpose/ Function Codes
 - o The appropriations to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of education have been allocated by purpose, function and project as defined in the uniform budget format, as shown on Schedule No 2. The Charlotte- Mecklenburg Board of Education must obtain the approval of the Board for any amendment to the Board of Education's budget which would (a) increase or decrease appropriation for capital outlay approved by the Board of Commissioners for such projects as listed in G.S. 115C-426(f)(1) or (2), or (b) increase or decrease the amount of other County appropriations allocated to a purpose or function by more than ten (10%) percent.

Limited Flexibility for Existing Funds

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- Realign existing funding in a way that reducing flexibility by allocating most funding into a few lines
- County funds could be spent completely from the Purpose/Function where they were allocated.
- Shifting county funds to another Purpose/Function would require Board Approval
- Flexibility could be granted based on specific strategies
- Potentially to have drastic impact on some CMS positions where county funds were leveraged instead of State.

Limited Flexibility for New Funds

- Combined with a funding formula to provide minimal funding calculated based on ADM and Employee Cost Index
- Request that any additional funding was tied to specific strategies and aligned to Purpose/Function
- May add some level of control to ensure funds were spent as intended.
- Joint Technical Workgroup
 - Establish a joint workgroup with key staff from the County and CMS tasked with developing options to achieve the desired goals
 - Options realigning existing resources
 - Options that require new funding
 - Budget, Strategic Planning, and Finance
 - Balanced participation
 - Adopt clear rules for sharing information in a timely manner
- State Involvement

Summary

- Restricted contingency could be used to an extent but may be problematic to restrict existing funding if it was more than what a dispute resolution would require.
- A funding formula can have potential to influence education policy over time, but it was important to maintain the minimum funding.
- Flexibility could be reducing through purpose/function allocation.
- Collaboration could produce options for consideration if it was balanced and information was shared.
- A combination of multiple approaches might be effective.

Mr. Cox answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

Chair Dunlap said his concern was he continued to hear from the community that students were leaving CMS, not college or career ready, and many who leave CMS have to take remedial courses when they go to CPCC. He said he continued to hear the gaps in educational levels between the various ethnic groups, and while he didn't think it was anyone's intent to hurt CMS financially, there was a desire to ensure they got what they were paying for. He said they were tax-payer dollars, and the County was significantly

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funding them more than required by law and more than any formula said the County should, yet the County continued to hear it was underfunding CMS. He said of course they would have it be that way, because they seek additional funding. He said they were funding them better than any other school district across the State, and they have the highest, teacher supplement in the State, but in looking at the results, they did not match up.

Commissioner Altman said when the conversation came up last year, the discussion was tied around consideration of restricted contingency based upon certain criteria the County would want to see met. She said as they embarked upon the conversation, she felt they were in a different quandary due to not being able to measure outcomes currently. She said her understanding on the School Board's gaps in equity was that they were not able to undertake the examination this year, because they could not get the children in the classroom to do it. She was not sure in what meaningful way they could undertake to do that, if they were to, when unable to measure student outcome. She said in 2016-2017 it was found that there was a 40% difference in outcomes for black students versus white students and a 42% disparity between Hispanic students and white students, and CMS undertook a strategic 2024 plan the following year, which would go to 2024 and said she did not think anyone thought they were on track for that due to COVID-19. She said they had a very significant problem which was not new and well pre-dated COVID-19. She said that was why they were having this conversation. She said she had heard people say the discussion was just political, and she wanted to dispel once and for all that it was not political for the thousands of families affected. She said everyone on the Board had an obligation to fight for those families and ensure they were using their ability, as a major funder for CMS, to raise this to the fore to address it as aggressively as possible. She said CMS was obligated, by law, to provide MTSS interventions for students who were not level three or above on tested, and her understanding was that only three percent of students who qualified were getting the interventions. She wondered if that was a metric or something that could be a valid way, even during COVID-19, to have the conversation. She said she loved the idea of a joint-technical, work group.

Chair Dunlap said in reference to MTSS, the State gave CMS the money to fund it in 2017, and they already had the dollars to do it, yet they were still not doing it.

Commissioner Meier asked if the \$21 million was already earmarked and they were open positions, so that was why there was a surplus.

Dena Diorio, County Manager, responded that the \$21 million was unassigned fund balance that could be used really for any purpose.

Commissioner Meier asked about the \$4 million for mental health.

Ms. Diorio responded that the Superintendent told her in advance this was what they were going to do and that it was the only way they could fund the \$15 an hour, by not filling the positions for student support services.

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Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked how their fund balance was different in being able to fund positions if it was not ongoing money.

Ms. Diorio responded that any county or city was different because they had a credit rating they were trying to maintain and other financial implications that CMS did not have. She said they maintain the fund balance but never really want to spend it. She said those were county dollars given to them for a specific purpose, and if they did not use it for the purpose given to them, they should not be able to just keep it. She said \$21 million would be able to fund those positions for a number of years, and there were always opportunities for the Board to be able to replace the fund balance with permanent, on-going, revenue sources. She asked to continue to be able to maintain a fund balance and never spend it, what was the point of having it. She said it was a rainy day and that CMS still had not agreed to use it for those purposes, and that was really what it was for, so she would challenge them to think about that.

Commissioner Powell said the Board had to pay attention to the achievement gap and that it was not a new problem, as they spoke about it 18-years ago. She said she did not think they could lay the weight of that on the current school board or superintendent but that they could leverage funding. She said from her point of view, they hoped they would use every available tool to insure CMS did everything it could do to reduce the achievement gap, and she did not think just because they could not do testing right now did not mean it would change the numbers drastically; they would land in a COVID-19 deficit that was worse than what they had already seen. She said they could guess what the test were based on what had been seen for so many years. She said it was the Board's responsibility, as elected leaders, to ensure they did not openly fund failure. She requested guidance from the County Manager and County Attorney on what they could do, because the children deserved better. She wanted to make clear that this was a top priority, especially with K through 3rd grade, because if they do not have the foundation by the 3rd grade, they would never catch up. She asked why every child did not have the multi-tiered system of support well before 3rd grade. She believed a new position needed to be created to assist with that.

Commissioner Jerrell said that for him, this was personal, and he believed this conversation was so important when thinking about what they were really dealing with, because at the end of the day, they were talking about children and families and their lives and futures. He said when he looked at 70% of the children they were failing as a community and as leaders that look like him, he had an issue with that, and part of the issue was because he knew it did not have to be. He said they had to do better; the community was majority people of color and they were dealing with a tremendous amount of disparities already and were not ready to seed education. He said they invested too much in the pre-k program and when they did the handoff- He said they were required by law to ensure the children received a sound and basic education and that they had to use very tool in the tool belt to make sure they were doing their duty as elected officials. He said at some point, everyone had to take responsibility for this, and he recommended they took every option available, whether it was restricted contingencies, a work group, or a hybrid of all of those options.

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Commissioner Leake grieved to hear a group of people who had been elected and took an oath to do what they were supposed to do for the children and poverty was at the top of the list. She said they were a part of perpetuating poverty when they did not want to prepare the young people to economically step up to the place and be able to take care of their families and their selves. She said she was elected to represent them and that when she was on the School Board, she did the same kind of fighting, to ensure the County Commissioners did right by the children. She asked the Board to do what was right by what they preach and promised black people you would do if they gave you support, because she had heard it said. She said it was not just about black children but about poor children, economics, and education. She said there was no job you could go on and not be held accountable for maintaining your position if you were not following the law, and the law said you shall, by legal bounds, provide a quality education for the children. She said the School Board did not do its job; it had a responsibility, which no one held them accountable for. She said if they were to ever hold people accountable, they better do it now. She asked the Board to ask the School Board to give a program which would be proven successful with reading, writing, and arithmetic. She asked the Board if they would do what they said they would do when they took their oath to be County Commissioners. She said the law said every child must be college or job ready. She said she fostered the fact for over 10 years saying to the public, sue the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system, because it was illegally mis-training the children. She said they should bring a lawsuit against the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system to make them do their job as they said they would and to be held accountable.

Chair Dunlap said he wanted to hear everyone's thoughts on how the County Manager could develop a budget to do what the Board expected, which was to hold them accountable for raising the achievement scores. He stated there was one thing they could mostly all agree on; no one wanted to be punitive. He said everyone understood the situation regarding COVID-19 and testing, but the point still remained even before there was COVID-19. He said for five years there had been no achievement advanced in CMS. He said what they were looking for was a meaningful way to ensure students would be successful, whether it meant working together as a group with CMS and coming to a common cause or the things they have seen. He said maybe there was some research out there that said specifically you must do A, B, and C, to get achievement.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell did not like the idea of reducing flexibility for CMS, and believed it was not a good idea. She felt the Board could not tie their hands behind their back to tell them to fix the problem; she felt it was a mistake and would not be in favor of it. She said with the County going to the level it went to for funding pre-k, her hope was that it would have a huge impact on the scores; this was an investment in the kids that she believed in. She believed it was an investment which would take time and was proud that they put millions of dollars into it. She said it was not going to the budget of CMS but was, she believed, investing in CMS in just a different way. She said her belief was that CMS was woefully underfunded for many years, and she believed it was a State problem and believed if they could be funded at the level they should be funded at, they should be funded much higher. She said they shouldn't be looking at holding money back

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to see results. She believed they needed more investment in actual bodies, people, assistants, assistant teachers which had been taken away over the years. She said she felt there should be greater investment but did not see they should do that from the County level, because she did not want them to raise what would then be expected to be done in future years, per formula. She felt that could really harm them in the long run as far as funding. She wanted her colleagues to know she was with them and wanted the children to have the education they deserved but that it would not come from not collaborating with CMS.

Commissioner Cotham said no matter how much money they give CMS, they were never happy, and the County was always the bad guy. She did not accept that they have no way to measure what was happening with the children currently, because other school districts around the Country were doing it, and she had seen some of the reports. She believed there was a way, and she was sure it was a lot of hard work. She said that Commissioner Leake was the Board's North Star on this topic. She requested that the African American Alliance to meet with the County Manager and School Board since there were a lot of educators in that group. She would like them to be involved. She said it was not all about money but about the work, and she would like to see more action. She said they were not getting much bang for their buck and that it was taxpayers who were paying it. She said it needed to be addressed now. She said the kids were losing their constitutional rights and that everyone needed to be outraged.

Chair Dunlap reviewed the amount of money the County was required to pay CMS. He said that for years CMS had flexibility to use those dollars anyway they wanted to, and the results they had today was from them spending the additional \$380 million. He spoke about when the schools were funded substantially less, yet the performance was much higher. He asked what happened and said he had his own theory, because they had four superintendents in five years, each taking things in a different direction, which he was sure accounted for some of it. He asked if the current plan was from the former superintendent and said he did not get an answer to that yet. He said at some point you have to realize the right plan was not in place to achieve the goal. He wanted someone to tell him that they acknowledge that and were going to make changes since they were not moving in the right direction, because the scores were sliding.

Chair Dunlap requested that the County Manager research and recommend ways, either by budget code or restricted contingency or any other legal and binding method, to hold CMS accountable.

Ms. Diorio responded that she needed to hear from the Board that they would have an open mind, because sometimes when staff gets together and think about how to do things, it may be a little outside of the box and scare a few people. She wanted to make sure they were okay with that.

Commissioner Scarborough said the Board had to get involved, because if they didn't, they would get what they currently had, which was nothing. She stated she would love to see the Board get involved.

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Commissioner Meier agreed the children were being failed and felt their sadness. She said to be concrete, she did support thinking outside the box and believed that was what they would have to do. She said there was a time in the school system when schools and teachers were awarded monetarily for test scores. She said when test scores rose, schools got awarded and teachers got awarded. She said she was not sure if that was something on the table but that she would not be opposed with that. She did agree with accountability and everyone being held accountable, including the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Jerrell said they could only worry about what was within their own control, which was what they funded. He said ideally, they wanted the State to lean in and do what they were supposed to, but the Board of Commissioners couldn't control that. He felt the restricted contingency was a good tool if they were able to tie that to specific plans and performance. He asked who was responsible for the ordinance regarding the 10% variance and Board approval; he asked if there was flexibility with the percentage.

Ms. Diorio responded it's the County's ordinance.

Mr. Cox responded the 10% was the State statute, which said if the Board did not decide to hold it to 10%, it would revert to 25%, which offered more flexibility, so the County ordinance specified the limit was at 10% within those program and function codes.

Commissioner Jerrell said the formula would have to be maintained over time regardless of the revenue growth. He asked for her reaction for if the Board did something around that.

Ms. Diorio it was something they should look at, particularly when they were seeing reductions in levels of enrollment. She said they needed to dig into the issue a little bit more of funding the charter schools, because there was a required allocation that the County had to give for charter schools. She said the County continued to fully-fund what was asked for charter schools, but they continued to underspend in that line item, so there was continually a surplus in that line. She said she did not know if that got allocated to something else or fell into the fund balance, but she believed they needed to maybe look at enrollment as a baseline for some kind of formula, then be able to fund other things on top of that.

Commissioner Jerrell responded that was helpful. He said it would be great for the County to come up with something where they do think outside of the box. He said the biggest thing that he would like to see was it tied to performance and outcomes in some kind of a way.

Commissioner Altman said she wanted to be sure that if this conversation was summarized that it was not described as County Commissioner Talked about Defunding CMS. She said she had heard it that way before, despite it not being about that at all. She stated they wanted to fund schools and so did she, as the mother of three, CMS children. She said what they didn't want was 40% disparities between the children. She said it was

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her observation that there was a real sense of missed opportunity at their joint meeting with the School Board in December. She said she felt what the Board of Commissioners really wanted, was asking for and needed was a clear picture and understanding of how the gap was getting closed in any sort of short, medium term. She did not feel like any of them really felt confident it would happen or could happen anytime soon at all. She said it was that despair and frustration of the Board of County Commissioners and people coming to the Board begging for help which was being expressed through this meeting. She did not believe it was too late, from her point of view. She still felt it would be beneficial if CMS was willing to explain to the Board what the meaningful, clear plan to close the gaps. She said she still did not know how the Manager and staff would tie in their recommendation to performance. She asked how they would achieve accountability. She said to one commissioner's point that yes, some sort of instrument was happening somewhere and was ongoing but the gold standard, was not happening currently, per her understanding. She said it may not be until the next academic year before it would be next administered, and that would be after the County made decisions for the budget cycle. She did not know what the Manager would do for those two problems, but they were open questions for her.

Commissioner Powell agreed with Commissioner Jerrell on looking at out-of-the-box options. She liked the County Manager to consider an early-intervention chief to come in and take charge for areas where there was an achievement gap and ensure each student was receiving the multi-tiered support that he or she needed, in a timely manner before third grade. She asked if there could be a recommendation and money in a contingency to fund this, and if CMS took the County up on that, there would be a performance report. She said she was not sure if that was legal, so County Attorney Wade would be needed for that. She said they were missing some kind of take-charge person to help with early intervention.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell thought tying money to performance was tried in the past and was a disaster, state and federal levels, so she was not sure it was a great tool for to use. She said that there was talk about things that happened in the past; money getting diverted; and the Board of County Commissioners being the bad guy, and she believed there was past history that may need to be released in order to look with fresh eyes to the partners they currently had and what they were trying to do. She said CMS had a plan that they did intact that got screwed up due to COVID-19, and even the year before COVID-19, they were not reaching their goals, but they knew that, identified it, and tried to correct it when COVID-19 hit. She did not believe the talking point of CMS not having a plan was accurate. She said work equaled people, and this was about funding people doing the work, as people did not work for free, nor did they take crumby-paying jobs. She did not feel that was a helpful argument. She asked if the State funding got reverted back to the State if not spent. She asked the Manager to look into unspent, county dollars going back to the County to be packaged into the next, fiscal year to fund the new allocation for CMS. She believed the problem was instruction, and they needed to hold the teachers and principals accountable but believed that was a function of- they had to pay for that; she felt holding back funds would be disastrous.

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Commissioner Leake said the question came to if they wanted to change what they had and that the answer was yes. She asked if they wanted the children to be successful and that they answer was yes. She said her motion that she made at the last budget meeting was for the Board of Education would present to the Board of County Commissioners a plan to orchestrate beginning success for the children, and they had yet to hear that. She said they had a meeting which was orchestrated to make the Board of Commissioners look like the bad guys who had to have someone come in and preside over them, because they did not know how to act. She said to her that was an affront to her intellect and service to the community by a group of people who had not been on the Board, nor had the experience, nor been to meetings, to see what was going on. She said she was wondering if they had that plan. She said money was important but was not everything and that she wished everyone looked at the salaries of the top-level people in the school system, as they were not making \$50,000 or \$60,000 but \$100,000.

Chair Dunlap said there were people in the community who would have negative things to say about the conversation, but because of the Sunshine Law, they were required by law to have those conversations [inaudible], so everyone would have the benefit of knowing what was said and who said it. He reiterated that their conversation was not about defunding CMS, but instead, it was about holding them accountable. He stated they had not talked about punishing CMS but that what they have said was that they should not pay for failure. He said they had not talked about CMS not doing what the County wanted them to do, as the County Commissioners realized they were elected just like they were elected; however, they took oaths like we took oaths. He reiterated what he heard his colleagues say; such as, every student should finish CMS and be prepared to have a college education or to be able to go have a career. He said he heard the Board say they were looking for tools to close the achievement gap and that every student who was entitled, should have the MTTS Plan, which was already being paid for by the State. He said what he heard was that this Board supported the notion that every child was entitled to a sound, basic education. He said all they were asking was that CMS work with them to make that it happened. He asked the County Manager to bring forth recommendations to help the Board achieve that.

Commissioner Cotham agreed with the Chair's comments that the Board cared about the children and wanted to be the best.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Gibbie Harris, Public Health Director, gave a brief update on the efforts addressing Community Violence.

Violence increased over the last several years in the community, including gun related homicides and assaults which exceed last year's homicides in Mecklenburg County by 19%. Related Assaults in Mecklenburg County also went up 19%.

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Approaching violence as a public health issue meant identifying the root causes of this epidemic and using data, tools, and evidence-informed best practices to address those causes

- Define and monitor the problem
- Identify risk and protective factors
- Develop and test prevention strategies
- Assure widespread adoption of effective prevention programs

Framework to Address Violence

Framework to address violence were the County, City, partners, and community working together to reduce violence, increase economic opportunity, and build healthier, more resilient communities with intergovernmental collaboration; community engagement & mobility; generate data and evidence; invest in community led prevention initiatives; interrupt violence.

MCPH Office of Violence Prevention

- Launched the Office of Violence Prevention to coordinate violence prevention initiatives for Mecklenburg County
- Provide staff support and coordination for intergovernmental efforts
- Lead development of a Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan
- Develop gun safety campaign in partnership with and support of existing law enforcement gun lock efforts

Community Outreach and Engagement

- Implement and support violence prevention initiatives in partnership with other community stakeholders, including additional investment in community-led initiatives
- Establish Youth Advisory Committee to advise on violence prevention and intervention efforts specifically focused on youth

Violence Prevention Data Collaborative

- Enhancements to Community Violence Prevention Dashboard:
 - o Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 2019
 - o Hospital Discharge Data
 - o Community Development-Community Policing Calls (CD-CP)
 - o Social Determinants of Health -Charlotte/Mecklenburg Quality of Life Explorer
- Provide guidance to evaluation of overall strategy and various initiatives

Violence Interruption Initiative

- In partnership with City of Charlotte completed assessment with Cure Violence Global
 - o Pilot site in Beatties Ford Rd and LaSalle Street corridor

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- Estimated \$500,000 shared investment in local community-based partner(s) to implement Cure Violence model

Implementation Time Frame

January: Contract with Cure Violence Global and engage fiscal agent

January-February: RFP process/select host organization

February-March: Train Host Organization

March-April: Hire interrupters/staff

May: Launch implementation

Community Resilience

A 5-year federal grant that promoted trauma informed and resilience approaches and equity in service provision for youth and families in the priority health area.

Activities planned for year three of the grant:

- Launch of the ReCAST website
- Train 420 additional service providers, first responders, public school educators, faith leaders, and community stakeholders in Resilience, Trauma Informed, and Compassionate Leadership approaches
- Increase the number of Faith Healing Hubs with Navigators supporting referrals and community resources for youth and families
- Recruit new cohort of organizations participating in a year-long Trauma Informed Learning Community
- Pilot youth-focused initiative

Ms. Harris answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

RECESS

The meeting recessed at 3:44 p.m. and reconvened at 4:02 p.m.

MEDICAID TRANSFORMATION

John Eller, Director of Social Services; Joe Penner, Medic Director; and Gibbie Harris, Health Director, jointly gave an update on the impact of Medicaid transformation on county services.

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- NC was moving from a fee to service Medicaid model “Medicaid Direct” to Managed Care model using Prepaid Health Plans (PHP’s) called “Medicaid Transformation”.
- Same Medicaid services just in a new way through PHPs
- The insurance companies assumed all of the risk for the individuals they cover, rather than the state.

Approximately 1.6 million of the current 2.1 million NC Medicaid beneficiaries would transition to NC Medicaid Managed Care.

- They would receive comprehensive care that integrated physical, behavioral, and pharmacy health through tailored plans (including non-emergency, medical transportation).
- Instead of one Medicaid program there were many health plans for a beneficiary to choose from.
- All health plans were required to have the same Medicaid services (office visits, blood tests, X rays, etc.), but may offer added services.
- Each plan had its own network of qualified doctors and health care providers.

Medicaid Transformation Timeline

- March 15, 2021: DHHS sends enrollments packets to beneficiaries & open enrollment begins
- May 14, 2021: Open enrollment period ends
- May 15, 2021: Auto-assignment/enrollment of PHP (only for customers who had not selected a health plans)
- June 30, 2022: End of Standard Plan contract awards/Phase II Tailored Begins
- July 1, 2021: Go Live
- July 1, 2021: Phase I Medicaid Transformation Launch/Managed Care Launch/PHPs begin to manage transportation services
- September 21, 2021: End of Choice Period to Change PCP

What’s New

- Can choose a health plan
- Most would be enrolled in NC Medicaid Managed Care

What Stays the Same

- Eligibility rules
- Services covered
- Co-pays (if any)
- Report changes to local DSS

Health Plans Include

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- Network of providers
- 24-hour nurse line
- No monthly premiums
- See the doctor as often as needed
- Help with referrals

Roles and Responsibilities

- DSS: Determine Eligibility
- NC Medicaid: Define population as mandatory; exempt; or excluded; auto-assignment
- Enrollment Broker: Mails notice and enrollment packet to beneficiaries
- Enrollment Broker: Choice counseling and enrollment; outreach
- Health Plan: Sends members health plan information; answers plan and benefits questions

Four Ways to Apply for Medicaid

- Online: Apply online at ePass
- Mail: Mail a paper application or drop it off at DSS
- On your Smartphone: Use the DSS All Access Benefits App; can also utilize this app to upload documents
- In person: Apply in person at DSS Kuralt or CRC

The Enrollment Broker (Maximus) was responsible for choice counseling for Health Plan and PCP selection; as part of this, the Enrollment Broker would also responsible for mailing all notices and handling enrollment.

Beneficiaries could keep his/her doctor, clinic or other health care provider as a PCP if the PCP has a contract with the health plan. Plans could be compared online.

- Choose a Plan Online: Log in to your NC Medicaid Managed Care account
- Mobile app: Search for NC Medicaid Managed Care on Google Play or the App Store
- Phone: Call toll free

Researching & Comparing Plans

PHP's would:

- Assist Members with primary care provider (PCP) information and complete PCP Auto-Assignment if no PCP was selected
- Ensure their Members receive the same services as they did under NC Medicaid Direct

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- Provide Non-Emergent Medical Transportation (NEMT) Services for Managed Care Members

Health Plan Responsibilities

- Supply NC Medicaid Managed Care Medicaid Card/Replacement Cards
- Conduct Care Needs Screening for Members
- Operate a Call Center/Member Service Lines
- Facilitate Appeals and Grievances
- Provide Health Plan Welcome Packets, including Welcome Letter, Medicaid Card and Member Handbook

DSS-MTS Transportation

- PHP's would be contracting with statewide NEMT brokers to arrange and provide NEMT to enrolled members. Transportation would be available if the beneficiary receives a Medicaid covered service provided by a qualified Medicaid provider (enrolled as a North Carolina Medicaid provider).
- Mecklenburg residents who were eligible for NEMT currently call our Transportation Scheduling to set up their trips. Once Medicaid Transformation was complete, they must call the broker assigned to their Medicaid plan to arrange NEMT services. The two brokers were LogistiCare and One Call (Transportation). Both brokers would have a 24-hour scheduling line available to customers.
- MTS and any subcontracted transportation vendors (taxi companies) would have to contract with one of the two brokers. This may yield a revenue reduction and subsequent funding loss which would present issue with sustained operations. We were waiting on the state to release provider agreements and guidance so they may truly understand the impact to provide more guidance and negotiate rates with the new brokers to minimize NEMT revenue loss to keep other services whole. MTS would still provide other non-NEMT services.

MEDIC

Issue 1 – Annual Medicaid Cost Report

- FY 2021 Budgeted Total Revenue = \$7.3mm; 23,940 of Medic's patients were insured through Medicaid
 - o \$2.2mm interim payments – No change to fee schedule
 - o \$5.1mm Annual Cost Report was AT RISK
- The substitute Cost Report method – Additional Utilization Based Payment (AUBP) was dated - tied to 2017 reimbursement levels, was unproven, and complex

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Issue 2 – Inconsistent Claims Processing and Contract Terms

- From one set of procedures, rules, appeals processes to six (i.e. existing contract with NC Medicaid and the new five payers)
 - Each new payer had new terms and conditions
 - Forced to sign! Or forfeit the AUBP (\$5.1mm)
 - Increased overhead costs consume resources for patient care
 - Payers may require contracts with transport brokers

Request–Advocate NC Medicaid mandate standard terms and conditions for EMS and ambulance services by Medic and other County EMS providers

Public Health

- Approximately 10-15% of the Public Health Department's clinic patients would be switched to Medicaid Managed Care and shifted to each of the five Prepaid Health Plans. Some programs would bill through Medicaid Direct as well.
- Public Health engaged outside legal counsel to ensure that contracts with the PHPs appropriately address the unique position of the Health Department as a provider. No contract was alike which creates unique challenges regarding IT requirements for data exchange around claims, outcomes, utilization and performance management.
- In lieu of an annual cost settlement, PH would receive Additional Utilization Based Payments (AUBPs) based on the Ratio of Costs to Charges from FY2017 cost settlement and paid quarterly by each PHP based paid claims. This places Public Health revenue streams at risk (~\$2+M FY19 settlement) given the lack of clarity as to whether current cost settlements would be converted to direct payments from PHPs.
- The Healthy Opportunities Pilot was still not finalized which was created to test and evaluate the impact of providing select evidence-based, non-medical interventions related to housing, food, transportation and interpersonal safety to high-needs Medicaid enrollees.
- Care Coordination for Care Management for At-Risk Children (CMARC) and Pregnancy Care Management (PCM) services under Managed Care would be paid by the PHPs via contracts for three years. Local Health Departments were given the right of first refusal for provision of these services during this period, but then PHP's were permitted to contract with any local care management entity (including the Mecklenburg County Health Department) for provision of CMARC and PCM.
- The Community Alternatives Program (CAP), the Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSA), Dental Services, and the Family Planning Waiver Program were excluded from Medicaid Managed Care and would continue to bill Medicaid through Medicaid Direct through NCTracks. The Department would continue to receive a Medicaid cost settlement for these excluded services.

Impact & Implications

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- Outreach, Outreach, Outreach
- NCDHHS would work with Mecklenburg County Government and the general public get the best information and guidance on how to prepare for Medicaid Transformation to:
 - o Distribute information to community partners, non-profits, and faith based/houses of worship;
 - o Provide outreach, events, and education sessions with community groups, beneficiaries and stakeholders on Medicaid Transformation and its impact on the county; &
 - o Document roll-out of Medicaid Transformation to inform decision-makers on how to ensure minimal disruptions in Medicaid services
- Ensure legislative oversight and advocacy with NCDHHS to ensure the numerous PHP contracts were more streamlined (all very different causing increased administrative burden)
 - o Potential for 15-50% increased call volume and customer visits at Kuralt and the CRC for the next two years
- Possible uncertain revenue impact on DSS NEMT (Transportation), MEDIC, and Public Health
- NCDHH's Additional Utilization Based Payments (AUBP) funding model/cost settlement report
- Ensure legislative oversight and advocacy for the Healthy Opportunities Pilot for Public Health to test and evaluate the impact of providing select evidence-based, non-medical interventions related to housing, food, transportation and interpersonal safety to high-needs Medicaid enrollees

Chair Dunlap said that they did not talk a lot about the tailored plan, which was probably the 6th plan mentioned. He said the tailored plan was the plan that would manage the care for those with mental health issues. He said they hoped people would be assigned to the five private health care plans, then the not-so-healthy people with mental conditions would be assigned to the LME's. He said for those concerned about Cardinal, they would now be the only people Cardinal would take care of, but Cardinal would now be required provide both physical and mental health to them.

RECESS

The retreat recessed at 4:47 p.m. to be reconvened at 8:00 a.m. on January 28, 2021.

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RETREAT DAY 2

Due to the State of North Carolina's Declaration of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and per NCGS § 166A-19.24, the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners conducted a remote meeting using the WebEx application.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met remotely to reconvene the annual retreat on Thursday, January 28, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. with Chair Dunlap presiding.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Commissioner Leigh Altman
Commissioner Patricia "Pat" Cotham
Commissioner George Dunlap
Commissioner Mark Jerrell
Commissioner Vilma D. Leake
Commissioner Laura Meier
Commissioner Elaine Powell
Commissioner Susan Rodriguez-McDowell
Commissioner Ella B. Scarborough

Dena Diorio, County Manager, welcomed the Board to day two of the retreat and reviewed the day's agenda.

MECK PLAYBOOK

Lee Jones, Park and Recreation Director, provided an overview of the Park and Recreation Master Plan.

A short video was shown.

Master Plan Definition & Precedent

A Master Plan was a document that provides organizations with a long-term roadmap for development. It assists leadership with identifying priorities, strategies and needs. At Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation, a Master Plan facilitates the anticipation of future recreation trends, adaptation to the needs of an evolving community and alignment of maintenance investment with capital spending.

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Department History

The Department developed its first Master Plan in 2008. A subsequent formal update document was completed in 2014. These plans have ensured that the County has consistently maintained a clear, supported vision for our parks and recreation system, described through a visual framework and actionable steps.

Current Efforts

Industry standards recommend developing Master Plans at least every 10 years. Therefore, the Department's newest Master Plan was currently under development. Meck Playbook would guide the Department's growth, programming and messaging over the next 10 years.

Mr. Jones reviewed plan components.

Methodology: Community Input

- Community workshops: 255+ participants
- Focused conversations: nine community pop-ups and 88 participants in four focus groups
- Survey polls: 800 surveyed households and 412 online surveys and mini polls taken
- Socially distance outreach: 2,600 website visits and 12 fishing for suggestions posters

Methodology: Assessment

Mr. Jones reviewed the park rating system.

Initial Findings: Priority Communities

As part of the "Discover" phase of Meck Playbook, an assessment of Department facilities was conducted to identify sites for park improvements and/or land acquisition. Based on initial analysis, there was a significant correlation between the level of improvements needed within parks and their location within priority communities.

Priority Communities were defined by:

- High rates of rentership
- Lower than average household income
- High youth and senior population
- High non-white resident population

The identified priority communities mapped here may take priority for investment or reinvestment in the coming years.

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Findings: Gaps & Acquisition Opportunities

The system assessment also included an analysis of potential gaps in parkland availability across the County. The zones mapped here have been identified through spatial analysis as occurring outside a 10-minute drive to a park facility.

Community Priorities – Facilities

- Statistically Valid Survey - As part of Meck Playbook, 800 households were surveyed. These households represent a diverse sampling of Mecklenburg County residents, by age, gender, household size and race/ethnicity.
- PIR (Priority Investment Ranking) - An index that equally weighs the importance residents place on facilities and the number of residents with unmet needs for facilities.

Community Priorities – Programs

- Fitness: Focuses holistically on individual well-being and health. Examples: aerobics, tai chi, and Pilates.
- Outdoor Adventure: Outdoor recreational activities that take place in natural areas. Examples: kayaking, camping, and hiking.
- Arts & Culture: Creative activities and performances. Examples: painting, theater, and music.
- Education & Life Skills: Activities associated with language and/or technology. Examples: speech, poetry, STEM, and computer science.
- Seniors: Activities for individuals aged 55 or older.
- Aquatics: Activities done in water. Examples: learn-to-swim, water safety.
- Therapeutic Recreation: A recreation, sports or wellness program, including those listed above, designed specifically for participants with disabilities.

Guiding Principles

- We must commit to equity across the system as we make improvements and close the gaps.
- We need to move beyond boundaries to better connect the system.
- We must evolve and grow County assets to keep pace with growth and meet the needs of new communities.
- We need to tell more stories to increase awareness and expand impact.

Mr. Jones reviewed the implementation goals.

Meck Playbook Timeline

- Ongoing: Steering and Stakeholder Committee Draft Review

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- January/February 2021: Complete recommendations for investments, staff and other initiatives
- February 2021: Final Draft
- Spring 2021: BOCC Presentation

Mr. Jones answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

Commissioner Jerrell said ask it related to the data, that it showed once again that they had to be intentional, particularly if they were going to focus on the notion of equity, he believed the provided maps showed exactly what was happening particularly as it related to the crescent when looking at the priority communities. He hoped, in talking about equity, that they were really willing to leverage resources to correct in ignored areas.

Commissioner Meier asked why there was inequity in the crescent when it came to parks and land. She asked if it was due to history of inequity and trying to play catch up or correct it. She asked how many openings there were in Park and Rec, and how many were due to COVID-19.

Mr. Jones responded when the system merged in 1992, they were a nature-based, more natural, area greenway system prior to the merger, and the City was a more smaller park/recreation center type of department. He said when the merger happened that they did not get a lot of additional resources in order to manage a much larger system. He said they had to do an assessment of it. He said the merger was not a peaceful time, and there was a lot of animosity that made the acquisition and stabilization of the department difficult. He said that over the years the department had to respond to taking what was given. It was almost like finishing someone else's dinner and moving it forward. He said what they had in that situation was competing priorities. He said secondly was looking at how they could move forward with meeting the ever-increasing population growth and having new facilities or making sure they had facilities in areas folks had nothing. He said the focus was once sports complexes, because they wanted to be the hub of amateur sports and wanted to develop greenways and needed to follow the downtown comprehensive development plan to ensure a park in each of the four wards uptown. He said they had been about to achieve that with the advent of Romare Bearden and First Ward Park, in addition to expanding Little Sugar Creek Greenway; however, when they developed their comprehensive master plan in 2008, they also received a bond referendum of \$250 million that would allow them to move forward with the start to build facilities in areas that did not have them. He said they hit the recession, and it slowed them down. He said their staff went down from 10 planners under him as the Director of Planning to one. He said that went on for a few years, then they started to gradually build back up based on the benevolence and foresight of the Board and Office of the County Manager, but that had been impacted by the unprecedented amount of growth, so you see a lot of different planning efforts going on. He said it was not something planned but just an oversight over a long period of time but that they now have a focus and objective planning process that would help them to address the concerns. He said he would get back to her with the amount of vacancies.

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Commissioner Powell stated she hoped the recommendations asked for what they needed in Park and Rec, to do better. She wanted to know what they needed, because people may not have a county-wide outcry for invasive removal, but they may not know what invasive were. She said they paid a lot of money to the professionals at Playbook and really hoped they would give the County strong feedback and recommendations on what the County needed here. She asked how many years were linked to the professional team that would be coming up with the playbook.

Mr. Jones responded they were contractually linked to them until they delivered a finished product that the County was satisfied with. He said they offered to remain in contact with the County as they moved forward with the implementation process and checkup on a regular basis. He said they would probably try to set up something that had been done previously, by reaching out to them on an annual basis. He said that typically most master plans would be revisited every-five years. He said the County thought that was too long as they grew and evolve so much, with so much energy and dynamics currently going on to think it was something they should do each year. He said they would start something up as sort of a ready-check system to receive an unbiased review of what the goals were, how they were achieved, and what had kept them from achieving them.

Commissioner Powell said she hoped a budget ask would be included for that, because it was something they had not had, and it had been a frustration of waiting for the new master plan, which seemed to take forever to address needs which they knew were real but had to wait for a team to come in to tell them how real they were. She said she hoped the continued refinement was part of the budget ask from Park and Rec. Commissioner Powell stated in response to Commissioner Meier that they had gotten there from significant urbanization without smart growth and thinking about the green infrastructure necessary for a good, quality of life and to protect the natural resources. She said that in addition to urbanization, there was, in all of the development, so much disproportionate sway, which spoke to what Commissioner Altman and Jerrell were bringing up about where the parks were being placed. She said it was inequitable; there were so many places where people would love to be able to do to a park but couldn't, and the reason she was talking about it was because land acquisition. She said when you pull up a number and say you have all of these acres; a significant number of those acres were to protect natural resources. She said developers were looking at the few pieces of land left and the County was in competition for that. She said she hoped that regardless of the acreage that they saw the priority of land acquisition, and that needed to be an important part of the presentation of how they would acquire the land, because if someone were to just look at the acreage, it was misleading. She said if they needed flexibility of spending, when they dedicated dollars to Park and Rec, she believed it would go into categories that would not give much flexibility, and if they needed more flexibility to please let the Board know.

Mr. Jones said he only presented the data of total-land holdings and that he did put a caveat in there about the percentages that one-third was either nature preserve or preserve land.

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Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked they would play catchup without losing-

Mr. Jones responded it was looking at the haves and have-nots. He said their focus needed to be on the parks that did not have any love in years, before the ones that have.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell wanted to ensure there would be a balance between the resources, which were already there, would be maintained to not slip below par. She stated she was not saying the County should not heavily invest in those priority communities.

Chair Dunlap predicted that when Meck Playbook comes it, someone would not agree with it and not follow it. He said that because that was something that happened when he first got on the Board. He said if they wanted equity and all the other things, they needed to be willing to follow the recommendations. He asked why Mecklenburg County did not acquire First Ward and Belmont Recreational Center after the merge.

Mr. Jones responded he would follow up but that the County did not get all of the parks, such as Polk Park and Marshall Park, as the City held on to them. He said those came later. He thought the City held on to those recreation centers because the City had some leases agreements with entities who were running them at the time.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

PARK EQUITY & OPERATING FUND

Lee Jones, Park and Recreation Director, provided an overview of the Park and Recreation operating fund and strategies in providing equitable funding of parks in the County.

Mr. Jones answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

RECESS

The meeting recessed at 10:00 a.m. and reconvened at 10:14 a.m.

ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP ACTION PLAN

Leslie Jones, Deputy County Manager, introduced the new Sustainability Manager, Erin Stanforth who joined the team last Tuesday.

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Erin Stanforth, Sustainability Manager, stated she was excited to be with Mecklenburg County.

Ms. Johnson reviewed the estimated budget, using the best available estimates, for retrofits, renovations, new construction; fleet; natural environment; and financial summary.

Environmental Leadership Policy

- Collective Call for Action
- Connects with Health
- Action was a Priority
- Innovation was Key
- Advances Equity
- Commits to Justice
- Recognizes Resilience
- Minimum Standards
- Climate Change & Current Response
- Collective Expertise
- Past Policies Highlighted
- Holistic

Policy to Action

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that an affiliated Environmental Leadership Action Plan (ELAP) guide the activities of County government; such that the County may take result-oriented steps; and align operations in support of current and future pollution reduction, resource conservation, and climate preparedness initiatives...

- Assumptions for Implementation
- Strive to Achieve Local Co-Benefits
- Purchase Renewable Energy Credits As Needed to Achieve Goal
- Align Capital Improvement Projects to County's CIP Cycles
- Adjust timelines as technology and cost efficiencies were realized
- Progress was dependent on funding allocations

The framework for the action plan was reviewed, with regard to facilities & fleet; natural environment; operations; and policies and partnerships. Facilities & Fleet

- This area required aggressive financial resources for Mecklenburg County to be successful in achieving a 2035 goal.
 - o +25% funding requests for new construction and major renovations
 - o FY22 -\$6.8M in capital requests
 - o FY23 -\$13M in capital requests

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- FY24-28 –Revisions TBD at CIP and budget process points
- External Volkswagen Settlement Funds were available but were not a guaranteed funding source.

Natural Environment

- Increase in funding was included for accelerated land acquisition as the County approaches buildout.
- \$4M increase in PRK annual funding
- Assuming a significant impact CIP investment approach, including a Storm Water Fee increase from FY22-FY26
- Additional investment from STW's current funding over 15 years
- \$98.9M for stream restorations; \$76.3M to address residual flood risks

Policies & Partnerships

- Actions in this area were particularly hard to identify costs.
- If business partners (CMS, CPCC, Etc.) were to be included in a transition to net-zero carbon, additional funding would need to be allocated.
- Working in economies of scale does offer the potential for cost saving advantages.

Operations

- Actions related to Responsible Purchasing and Employee Engagement could be made with minimal additional funding.
- New construction and demolition waste minimization efforts would require a tipping fee increase. These price points were dependent on what was reasonable when compared to private sector competition.

Ms. Johnson reviewed budget estimates annualized for 2030 and 2035 and implementation strategies.

Next Steps

- Final Review & Edits - (February 2021)
- BOCC Environmental Stewardship Committee- (February/March 2021)
- BOCC Adoption of Policy Modifications - (February/March 2021)
- BOCC Adoption of Budget - (June 2021)
- Implementation & Evaluation - (July 2021 - Ongoing)

Ms. Johnson answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

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BOARD TOPICS OF INTEREST – WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Anthony Trotman, Deputy County Manager, provided an overview of workforce development efforts including an overview; job outlook; programs & initiatives; gap analysis; strategies; and next steps.

Mr. Trotman answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation was on file with the Clerk to the Board.

RECESS

The meeting recessed at 12:22 p.m. and reconvened at 1:33 p.m.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Adrian Cox, Management & Budget Director, provided information on initiatives in other jurisdictions, as a background for a discussion related to the Restorative Justice topic of interest.

The term and theory of restorative justice originated from the criminal justice field. In that context, restorative justice focused on ways to repair harm caused by criminal behavior and seeks reconciliation between the offender, victim and larger community. For the purposes of this presentation, the term restorative justice was being used to describe efforts to provide reparative responses to historically discriminatory practices and policies that have negatively impacted Mecklenburg County residents, primarily those who were African-American (and other minorities).

Mr. Cox reviewed reparation plans from both Asheville, NC and Evanston, IL.

Reparations Resolutions & Taskforces

- Buncombe County, NC – Resolution passed August of 2020. County would appoint representatives to Asheville's Community Reparations Commission.
- Burlington, VT – City Council passed a resolution in August 2020 to create a year-long task force to study reparations.
- Chicago, IL-City Council subcommittee to look at the feasibility of reparations.
- Durham, NC – In 2018, formed a Racial Equity Taskforce (RETF). Recommendations were made on how to close the racial inequity gap. Task Force determined reparations to be outside the City's legal authority and fiscal feasibility.
- Providence, RI – Executive order signed in summer 2020 to determine the feasibility of reparations.

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- Washington, DC – Taskforce to study the economic impact of slavery in the city in October of 2020.

Reparations Summary

- A few communities have adopted resolutions expressing intent
- Investments in programs not cash to individuals
- No funding spent
- Exploratory taskforce was a common approach

Mr. Cox reviewed the following investments in equity:

- Madison, WI – Equity in Community Engagement; City Utilized Neighborhood Response
- Portland, OR – Equity in Housing
- Oakland, CA – Equity in Transportation
- King County, WA – Equity in Open Space
- Seattle, WA – Equity Education
- Mecklenburg County Actions on Equity

Considerations for New Programs

- Counties in North Carolina may only fund activities that serve a public purpose, and activities must benefit the public generally.
- North Carolina was not a “home rule” state.
- Only the General Assembly can empower local governments to act.
- Ongoing expenses would need to be supported by an ongoing revenue source.

Mr. Cox answered Commissioners’ questions and responded to comments.

MWSBE PURCHASING STRATEGY

Peter Zeiler, Economic Development Director, reviewed the implementation plan objective; Mecklenburg County stakeholders and roles; overview of implementation plan timeline; review of 11 recommendations and timelines.

Mr. Zeiler answered Commissioners’ questions and responded to comments.

Chair Dunlap recommended a disparity study.

The presentation was on file with the Clerk to the Board.

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RECESS

The meeting recessed at 2:43 p.m. and reconvened at 2:55 p.m.

PROMOTING MECKLENBURG COUNTY

Daniel Diehl, Public Information Director, provided an update on strategies for promoting Mecklenburg County.

Mr. Diehl answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

RECESS

The meeting recessed at 4:09 p.m. to be reconvened at 8:00 a.m. on January 29, 2021.

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RETREAT DAY 3

Due to the State of North Carolina's Declaration of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and per NCGS § 166A-19.24, the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners conducted a remote meeting using the WebEx application.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met remotely to reconvene the annual retreat on Friday, January 29, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. with Chair Dunlap presiding.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Commissioner Leigh Altman
Commissioner Patricia "Pat" Cotham
Commissioner George Dunlap
Commissioner Mark Jerrell
Commissioner Vilma D. Leake
Commissioner Laura Meier
Commissioner Elaine Powell
Commissioner Susan Rodriguez-McDowell
Commissioner Ella B. Scarborough

HUMAN CAPITAL

Paula Herman, Human Resources Director, provided an update on the County's strategy to improve recruitment and retention.

*A short video was shown.

Ms. Herman answered Commissioners' questions and responded to comments.

BOARD TOPICS OF INTEREST – REMAINING TOPICS

Adrian Cox, Management & Budget Director, reviewed the 32 topics of interest.

Public Health

1. New Initiatives for Public Health – Commissioner Altman
2. Black Maternal Health & Infant Mortality Rate – Commissioner Meier
3. Access to Healthcare – Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell
4. Internal Consulting – Commissioner Cotham

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Mental Health & Public Safety

5. Mental Health Services – Commissioners Rodriguez-McDowell & Powell
6. New Initiatives for Safe Gun Storage – Commissioner Altman
7. Family Justice Center – Commissioners Rodriguez-McDowell & Powell
8. New Initiative Lead Workforce Development – Commissioner Altman
9. Small Business Support – Commissioner Powell
10. MWSBE Grants & Forgivable Loans – Commissioner Jerrell
11. Immigrant & Refuge Business Support – Commissioner Jerrell

Affordable Housing, Eviction, & Homelessness

12. Elder Response Initiative – Critical Home Repair – Commissioner Leake
13. Assistance Prior to Eviction – Commissioner Leake
14. Affordable Housing Expansion – Commissioner Jerrell
15. Safe Parking for Homeless Families – Commissioner Jerrell

COVID-19 Impacts

16. Financial Outlook – Commissioner Powell
17. Senior Centers – Commissioner Leake

Land Acquisition & Parks

18. Land Bonds – Commissioners Rodriguez-McDowell & Powell
19. Park and Recreation Operating – Commissioner Powell
20. Park Maintenance & Equity – Commissioner Jerrell
21. East Charlotte Parks – Commissioner Jerrell

Miscellaneous

22. Food Desert Executives – Commissioner Leake
23. Education – Commissioner Leake
24. Insourcing – Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell
25. Code Enforcement Positions – Commissioner Powell
26. Magistrates in North Mecklenburg – Commissioner Powell
27. Re-establish Mt. Island Lake Marine Commission – Commissioner Powell
28. Environmental Leadership Action Plan – Commissioner Powell
29. County Spending Above What is Mandated – Commissioner Cotham
30. Restorative Justice – Commissioner Jerrell
31. Promoting Mecklenburg County – Commissioner Meier
32. Promoting Mecklenburg County 2 – Commissioner Meier

Topics of interest with responses are available on file with the Clerk to the Board.

Commissioner Leake said she wanted to see put down what the County gave the school system for the last two years that was above and beyond what was required by State law.

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She said that the results of the \$5.7 billion the school board received did not come through in results as it related to quality of education on in west Charlotte. She said they needed to know where the deserts were and what the outcomes happened to be. She stated Habitat for Humanity had not responded but had been hassling her about the issue of support in renovating the senior facilities as to what the County said they could do. She said they did not employ black contractors and asked why they were in business with a company and giving them a million dollars.

Commissioner Cotham said that the County was doing what the State should be doing, and she believed it was something the lobbyist should all know and have on their mind. She recommended to at least have the magistrate part time Friday, Saturday, and maybe one other day, since that was when a lot of problems happened. She wanted pressure put on the legislatures to help with the matter.

Commissioner Altman stated that she was not asking for the County to provide primary care services but that what she was hearing was that local-health, safety net providers were seeing a sharply increased demand for chronic care management, no doubt because people were losing their jobs and health insurance. She said they knew that [inaudible] would be able to access care for diabetes and high blood pressure was correlated with worse COVID-19 outcomes, which they were also focused on. She said they also knew there was increased anxiety and depression in the County. She asked if they anticipated, in any capacity, either in the form of past, undistributed, CARES dollars or the Biden administration or anywhere in the budget, to fund more providers and staff at Charlotte Community Health Clinic to meet increase demand for chronic care and mental health access for the uninsured. The same was asked for Lake Normal Community Health Clinic, which Commissioner Altman understood had a high proportion of undocumented residents or to fund more resources so that more providers and staff could be hired since they too serve undocumented and uninsured individuals.

Mr. Cox responded that at this point it was too early to know what they would specifically have capacity for until all the feedback was taken in and the Manager has an opportunity to look at the priority as well.

Dena Diorio, County Manager, responded that the CARES money had not all been distributed and that they were looking at how much was available. She said they would put together recommendations for the Board to consider; at this point, they did not know what the Biden administration would bring forth and whether or not it would get passed or if the County would get any money. She said in terms of hiring staff at the facilities that the money goes away, and if the County was able to provide funding for positions, they would have to have the ability to either continue to fund those or they would go away. She stated there was a little bit of a risk in providing dollars for them to higher people.

Commissioner Powell in speaking about livable wages stated it was part of the infrastructure that perpetuated inequities. She asked how they could move forward so that they were not doing that and people who mowed the grass or cleaned the buildings

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were not receiving \$7.25 an hour. She said when the land bond proposal went before the Board, it was a different time and that there had never been a better time to get a land bond. She said, in reference to number five, that the CIT program may have been a big program but that it was also a big need. She said the first responders saw more traumatic things in a matter of a month than the Board saw in a lifetime, and based on what she had heard from law enforcement and first responders, they needed to have ongoing mental health first aid training, be it an annual or biannual refresher, but what could the Board help with for trauma-informed care and response for crisis intervention training for all of the first responders. She said that maybe it was not the right time but that it was something they needed to look at expanding, especially the mental health first aid on an ongoing basis. She asked for her colleagues to help her in reaching out to the general assembly together, in reference to a magistrates' office; she would appreciate the support, because they really needed it in North Mecklenburg. She believed, especially for domestic violence victims that who change their minds about going to the magistrates' office uptown and go back to the abuse.

Commissioner Jerrell stated he was glad to support Commissioner Powell with that effort. He pointed out, in reference to the response about safe parking for the homeless, that shelter capacity fluctuated so much and was hard to gage. He said it would also change as they got through COVID-19 as well. He said in regard to the affordable housing expansion that he was not asking for an additional dollar amount but for an expansion of AMI, while using the existing funds. He said related to the MWSBE grants and forgivable loans and the immigrant and refugee business support. He said he noticed in the response for the immigrant and refugees that the County said it would be able to provide funding through different organizations potentially that could support that population. He asked if the same thing was possible with respect to the MWSBE piece.

Peter Zeiler, Economic Development Director, responded that they were already providing a number of support programs for the MWSBE's and small businesses through things like the Get up and Grow Program and Launch Pad Program. He said when they talk about being able to roll that out to the immigrant community, they were talking about being able to take those supportive services and partner with an external agency to help deliver the services directly to the immigrant population. He said it was not so much that they would need to create new programs for MWSBE's; it would be expanding programming toward the immigrant community as well.

Commissioner Jerrell said he loved the programs currently in place and believed where there was opportunity was the grant aspect, the financial piece. He said they had the small business lending program, which was great but that he was talking about the opportunity for grants to those MWSBE qualified businesses as well.

Mr. Zeiler responded that they would have to do more in-depth exploration on using other organizations as a grant conduit.

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Commissioner Meier put a plug in for the arts, stating the arts took a huge hit during COVID-19, and she hoped the County would continue to support the arts and struggling artists. She said equity, equity, equity when it comes to parks, education, and affordable housing and that she supported it in all kinds of ways. She supported the land bonds and said they should have the foresight to buy land when it was a good time to do so and have a land bank for the neighborhoods that were being build. She said they did not have the greenspace, and if they did this, they would have that flexibility, not only of protecting greenspace but having it to create parks for the new areas.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell said the idea of a walk-in crisis center, what belonged in the wheelhouse. She said she imagined it would fall under Cardinal, but she wondered if it was on the County to advocate for something like that. She said it was directly related to all the had been talking about with homelessness. She said in terms of the CIT training, that it was really relevant to what was going on in the community, and she would like to know who would initiate it and what was the County's to do. She asked who the convener was. She said she would appreciate if there was a way for someone to take seriously the consideration of number 24, which was insourcing. She said instead of looking at it as an elephant of \$19.6 million plus, could they break it down and look at doing certain departments to see how much of a hit it would take. She said perpetuating inequality was not a business they wanted to be in and that they could not be hypocrites, which they would be if those jobs were outsourced.

Chair Dunlap asked Commissioners to consider, when talking about whether or not they would move away from outsourcing versus bringing departments in, the cost and not just the cost of salaries but all the other ancillary costs that went along with that, such as health care and 401k. He said those things would increase the cost of government. He said you cannot, at one point, say you are going to run a lean government, then talk about how you increase government, because when you look at the projections of what revenue they planned to gain, it could be all eaten up just in salaries. He said, in reference to changing the AMI, that the reason why they focused on 30% was because that was what the Board said. He said he saw no problem in expanding it to cover a different group of people. He said when they asked to re-look at mid-year, budget projections, arts and science was a part of that. He said he expected the County Manager to bring back what the current status was in relation to those things talked about in the budget. He agreed they needed to acquire more land and also thought there should be an evaluation as to which was more cost effective to buy land. He said they talked about how they staggered somethings but wanted to go out and get a \$500 million land bond and that they could go out and do that the same way. He said he believed there was a cost associated versus increasing the amount of land bond put in PAYGO versus what the land bond cost. He said they needed an analysis to determine which was the best approach to buy land. He stated he had been speaking to people within the business community who were willing to assist the County. He said he had been doing some independent research on his own about things they may propose. He felt it was now time to do something. He said he was considering some transitional housing, which would be permanent, temporary housing, like tiny homes or things of that nature. He asked the Board to keep in mind things from

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the retreat, such as being concerned about the location, since they would need transportation to get to the other services they need; those kinds of housing would need approval by planning and zoning. He said they wanted safety and security, so it needed to be something with a lock that could secure their possessions so that they feel safe. He said he already put it on the County Manager's radar.

RECESS

The meeting was recessed at 10:28 a.m. and reconvened at 10:41 a.m.

BOARD PRIORITY SETTING INTRODUCTION

Adrian Cox, Management & Budget Director, provided background information and an opportunity for discussion in preparation for budget priority setting.

Major Investments – FY2020 & FY2021

- Reduce Racial Disparities - \$14.6M invested to Reduce Racial Disparities in Food Security, Health Care, Non-Profit Funding, Small Business Support, Park Investment, Census Representation, Library Access, and MWSBE program review.
- Meck Pre-K - Expanded MECK Pre-K by \$12.5M, serving 986 additional children and 56 new classrooms and cleared the Childcare Waitlist of all 4-year old children by investing \$14M.
- Affordable Housing - Established Affordable Housing Rental Subsidy Fund, with \$14M; funded the critical, home-repair program for 2 years \$2M; invested \$500K to provide legal services to residents in eviction proceedings
- Mental Health - Funded \$9.2M of new mental & emotional support positions at CMS; Increased Mental Health support services at the Detention Center
- Parks & Greenway - Increased funding for Parks & Greenways by \$21.2M and 124 positions; accelerated greenway projects with \$30M in additional capital funding

Funding Sources – FY2020 & FY2021

- \$94.6 million
- \$33.5 million one-time fund balance
- \$57.6 million ongoing County dollars
- 139 positions

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Some Challenges

- Affordable housing was a new role for the County. Over the last two years, County Staff have been working with new partners to develop responses to begin addressing this issue.
- Residents in the budget workshops had an unclear understanding of Reduce Racial Disparities and often asked “Should it not be part of all the priorities?”
- All-encompassing nature of Reduce Racial Disparities makes it challenging to identify individual budget investments exclusively tied to this priority.
- COVID19 resulted in some delays as the community shifted in response to the pandemic.
- Identifying solutions to match the funding (ex. Food Deserts)
- Recruitment and retention

FY2022 Budget

- Public Engagement Survey results continued to indicate that Education, Affordable Housing, and Health& Human Services are the three highest priorities for the community
- Recruitment and retention were critical to continued success achieving the goals of the Board.
- Medicaid transformation would impact FY2022.
- The Board has discussed:
 - Education
 - Park and Recreation Master Plan
 - Environmental Stewardship Action Plan
 - MWSBE Purchasing
 - Many other topics of interest
- The Board will have an opportunity to reassess the Budget Priorities.

Monica Allen, Strategic Planning and Budget Director, reviewed performance highlights.

Board Priority Setting

Mr. Cox introduced Meagan Palmer, a certified facilitator with over 30-years of experience in local government, the owner of MPC Consulting, and former employee of Mecklenburg County.

Meagan Palmer, Certified Facilitator, reviewed the process of setting the priorities.

Commissioners participated in a prioritizing exercise and provide priorities.

Each Commissioner listed their priorities in no particular order.

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- Commissioner Altman
 - COVID-19 recovery
 - Meck Pre-K
 - Environmental priorities, encompassing parks and greenways
 - Racial Disparities – Commissioner Altman said she struggled with this one only because she believed the Board should use a racial-equity lens for everything the Board did.
 - Affordable Housing

- Commissioner Cotham
 - Meck Pre-K, including the value of the program
 - Housing for the Homeless
 - Seniors
 - Mental Health Community Training
 - Life Skills

- Commissioner Powell
 - Full funding for Environmental Leadership Action Plan 2035
 - Increased funding for park operations
 - Funding for strategic land acquisition
 - Funding an Early-Intervention Czar for the achievement gap for K-3
 - Human capital

- Commissioner Leake
 - Critical home repair for seniors
 - Pre-K Program
 - Increase the programs for reading, writing, and arithmetic for grades K-3
 - Improve the scores
 - Food deserts, defining where and why
 - Racial disparities, as related to black women

- Chair Dunlap
 - Homelessness, chronically homeless
 - Health disparities
 - Affordable housing
 - Education broadly, Pre-K specifically
 - Community safety
 - Family Justice Center

- Commissioner Jerrell
 - Affordable housing
 - Mental health
 - Homelessness
 - Economic mobility

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- Senior support
 - Parks and connectivity
 - Reducing racial disparities
 - Meck Pre-K
 - Racial and social equity
 - Food insecurity
 - Formerly incarcerated re-entry assistance
 - Support for working families
- Commissioner Meier
- Increase workforce development, specifically in sciences
 - Increase investment in Affordable housing
 - Meck Pre-K, specifically clear the waitlist
 - Increase greenspace equitably
 - Reduce racial disparities in education
- Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell
- Reducing income inequality
 - Access to parks and greenways
 - Support for families
 - Meck Pre-K and childcare
 - Affordable housing and homelessness
 - Reducing racial disparities
 - Land acquisition
 - Mental health
 - Environmental Action Plan

Ms. Palmer made a request for Commissioners to consolidate like-priorities.

Commissioner Cotham asked if Meck Pre-K could say enhanced Meck Pre-K, which would include what she wanted, which was connecting-the-dots of what Meck Pre-K was.

Commissioner Leake said for education, she would like to add an increase in percentage of students who would be college and career ready and improve the reading scores for black students.

Commissioner Altman said she believed COVID-19 recovery was too broad; she updated it with COVID-19 economic recovery.

Commissioner Jerrell said they could remove his racial and social equity piece since it would fall under reducing racial disparities.

Commissioner Meier consolidated the mental health items to increase mental health services.

Commissioner Cotham consolidated the senior items into increasing senior services, including home repair and job and family services.

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Ms. Palmer suggested that the homelessness items be combined.

Commissioner Altman said as much as she liked to prioritize mental health, if the overwhelming majority of the mental health services and delivery of those services were subcontracted out to Cardinal, she needed to know how much influence the County would be able to have.

Ms. Diorio responded that they were trying to influence what happens at Cardinal, which was an ongoing process, but if mental health was something rising to the top, they would look at whether or not they wanted to expand County funding to mental health, which was one of the priorities now. She said they had been adding dollars in the way of providing mental health services in the detention center and schools. She said there were ways where they could plug in and add funding in certain areas that would not be funded through Cardinal.

Ms. Palmer told the Board to narrow their priorities down to a top five.

Commissioner Cotham said they could get rid of life-skills training, because it was also covered under the one about re-entry services and senior services.

Top Five

- Commissioner Dunlap
 - Homelessness
 - Affordable housing
 - Reducing racial disparities
 - Meck Pre-K
 - Family Justice Center

- Commissioner Powell
 - Environmental Leadership Action Plan
 - Early Intervention Czar
 - Land acquisition
 - Park operations
 - Family Justice Center

- Commissioner Leake
 - Senior citizen support, which includes renovating
 - Food desert
 - Education, as it related to NC requirements for the school system and improving education for black children, reading scores, etc.
 - Community safety
 - Affordable housing

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- Commissioner Meier
 - Workforce development
 - Affordable housing
 - Meck Pre-K
 - Education, reducing racial disparities
 - Mental Health

- Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell
 - Environmental Action Plan
 - Land acquisition
 - Family Justice Center
 - Meck Pre-K
 - Reduce racial disparities

- Commissioner Jerrell
 - Reducing racial disparities
 - Affordable housing
 - Greenspace expansion
 - Economic mobility
 - Enhanced Meck Pre-K

- Commissioner Cotham
 - COVID-19 economic development
 - Affordable housing
 - Expand senior services
 - Increase mental health services
 - Enhanced Meck Pre-K

- Commissioner Altman
 - Workforce development
 - Environmental Leadership Action Plan
 - Land Acquisition
 - Meck Pre-K
 - Reducing racial disparities

- Commissioner Scarborough did not give a response.

Lyden Williams, County Manager's Office, said there were four priorities tied for seven, so they would need to select two of the four with two-votes-each.

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To Get to the Top 8

Commissioner Powell voted for education.

Commissioner Dunlap voted for education.

Commissioner Meier voted for education.

Commissioner Altman voted for workforce development.

Commissioner Cotham voted for education.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell voted for education.

Commissioner Leake voted for education.

Commissioner Jerrell voted for education.

Commissioner Scarborough did not vote.

Mr. Williams said the top two were education and workforce development.

Top 8

1. Enhance Meck Pre-K
2. Affordable Housing
3. Reducing Racial Disparities
4. Environmental Leadership Action Plan 2035
5. Family Justice Center
6. Land Acquisition
7. Education (Broadly) - improving outcomes for black children (reading etc.)
8. Workforce development

Commissioners then rated impact and desirability based on a 1-4 range.

RECESS

The meeting was recessed at 12:43 p.m. and reconvened at 12:49 p.m.

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PRIORITY SETTING REPORT OUT

Ms. Palmer read out the list of Commissioners' top five priorities.

Results

1. Education
2. Reducing racial disparities
3. Family Justice Center
4. Enhancing Meck Pre-K
5. Environmental Leadership Action Plan 2035

Ms. Palmer informed the Board that their next steps would be working with Mr. Cox and Dr. Allen on making the five priorities meaningful and measurable, including getting target words in, to know what to focus, on in order to move forward towards an action plan.

Dr. Allen said she felt the Family Justice Center was a tactic, so a means to an end. She said the center was in place to accomplish something else, maybe reducing racial disparities or something in the community. She also felt Environmental Leadership Action Plan was also a tactic. She felt some of the same concerns with reducing racial disparities, because it could include 1,500 different programs and was not a topical area. She recommended that reducing racial disparities was a threat throughout the other areas and not a stand-alone board priority, as so many things could be lumped into that.

Chair Dunlap said if Family Justice Center was a tactic, he thought by putting it up that the Board was saying they were interested in it being funded but did not want to take away from the other priorities, and the same would be true with racial disparities and the Environmental Leadership Action Plan. He said if they indicate, by virtue of the fact that it was on the list, the desire for funding in those areas, that would really mean they demonstrate to the County Manager that the Board wanted funding in those areas, and the priorities would still actually stay the same just about.

Ms. Diorio said in terms of the Family Justice Center that it probably was not even a FY22 funding item but indeed a FY23 in terms of the \$10 million the County would need. She stated she knew it was a priority and would continue to keep it on the radar but was not sure it needed to be something done here, as it was basically a capital contribution that would be in the next round of capital planning. Ms. Diorio said in terms of racial disparities that everything would be looked at with an equity lens from a perspective of racial disparities.

New Priorities

1. Education
2. Meck Pre-k
3. Environment
4. Workforce development
5. Affordable housing

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Straw Vote

Commissioner Leake voted yes.

Commissioner Powell requested more conversation.

Commissioner Meier voted yes.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell stated the process felt rushed and that the process was not a great way to filter what their priorities were. She did not want to commit to these five priorities.

Commissioner Jerrell voted no.

Commissioner Altman voted yes.

Commissioner Dunlap voted yes.

Commissioner Scarborough did not vote.

Commissioner Cotham voted yes. She said what they did last time should be included in this so they would not lose priorities that they were working on.

Commissioner Jerrell wanted to make sure the priorities they set were also encompassing some of the data they received from their surveys as well.

A motion was made by Commissioner Leake and seconded by Commissioner Altman to accept the recommendations from the County Manager that the new, top-five priorities be: education; Meck Pre-K; environment; workforce development; and affordable housing.

A vote was taken on the motion and carried as followed:

YES: Commissioners Altman, Cotham, Dunlap, Leake, Meier, and Scarborough

NO: Commissioners Jerrell, Powell, and Rodriguez-McDowell

The presentation is on file with the Clerk to the Board.

RECESS

The meeting was recessed at 1:15 p.m. and reconvened at 2:22 p.m.

FY2022 BUDGET PREPARATION

Adrian Cox, Management & Budget Director, reviewed the proposed budget workshop agenda and operating budget calendar. He said the dates were approved by the Board when they adopted their meeting calendar back in December.

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CLOSING COMMENTS

Dena Diorio, County Manager, felt she received great direction. She said in terms of education that it was obvious that accountability and results needed to be a big focus, which they would be working on. She said for workforce development they would really be looking at pathways for better alignment in terms of jobs in the community, as well as what was going on at CMS. She said for the area of restorative justice, they really needed to look at it more carefully to see what opportunities may or may not exist to do something there. She said they received good feedback for promoting the County and heard they should retain the seal as the logo, as it was a trusted logo that people knew and liked. She believed Mecklenburg Minutes by district would be great, and they were glad the Board supported it. She told Chair Dunlap to get ready for his tv show, because they were going to put him on tv. She said coordinating marketing efforts would continue to be worked on. She said human capital focus on pay equity was a big take away that they would spend some time working on. She said there was a lot of passion on all of the topics of interest, and she took a lot of notes. She said for the Environmental Action Plan, significant support for all of that and heard that 2035 was a good target for Mecklenburg County in terms of implementing all of it. She said at the end people may feel it did not go the way it should have gone, but the Board gave feedback on a number of topics that were not part of the priorities, and they would take all of the Board's feed back into consideration. She said the priorities would just give a little more focus, but in terms of how things would get funded, they would look at everything in Mecklenburg County and make their best efforts to fund everything everyone wanted to see accomplished. She did not want people to be too concerned with how the priorities ultimately shook out. She said they currently only had \$41 million of new-growth revenue to spend, and while they always wanted to do everything that they could, that was not possible. She said they would have to be very strategic with what they fund and how they fund it. She said they would continue to go back and scrub every department to ensure they get every last dollar of savings they could in order to be able to fund all of the things that were important. She extended her thanks to her executive team, the cabinet. She congratulated Adrien Cox, who was officially the Management & Budget Director. She continued by thanking the OMB team, Monica Allen and the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Team, who were incredibly important to the process. She said they had a tremendous amount of talent in Mecklenburg County and were so fortunate to have the number of people they had who were so talented and qualified to do what they did. She thanked Doc Russel, Jean Russel, and Sandra Barley. She thanked the American Sign Language Interpreters, Emily Jones and Rick Hefner and Spanish Interpreters, Liz Carico, Luis Beasley, Mike Cortez, Peter Floyd, and David Miller. She said she was proud to be their County Manager and looked forward to putting the budget together and working with everyone to walk away with a budget they could all be proud of.

Chair Dunlap thanked all of his colleagues and stated it was one of the best budget retreats he had participated in. He said he had not been at a retreat where so much

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information had been shared and gathered. He believed that had been probably the most engaging group of County Commissioners the County has had in a long time. He let the Board know that their concerns were heard, and while it may have not come out the way they would have liked it, he had not been disappointed by any budget presented by the County Manager. He promised the Board they would see the County Manager made an effort to include all of the Board's thoughts and ideas, whether the items became one of the top-five priorities or not, because they all represented various segments of the community. He said the Manager would use the survey results as one of the tools to develop the budget. He said the budget would not be adopted until the majority of the Board agreed. He explained that the Manager would present her budget, which would be her best recommendation for the County and then pass that on to the Board. He said the Board would then debate her recommendations and make changes if necessary. He said historically they did not do a lot of changes to Manager recommendations, because she takes everyone's ideas, recommendations, and suggestions into consideration.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Leake and seconded by Commissioner Scarborough to adjourn the meeting.

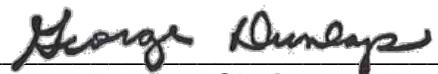
YES: Commissioners Altman, Cotham, Dunlap, Jerrell, Meier, Powell, and Scarborough

NO: Commissioners Leake and Rodriguez-McDowell

The meeting was adjourned at 2:44 p.m.



Emily A. Kunze, Clerk



George Dunlap, Chair