

February 7, 2017

Virginia:

AT A CONTINUED MEETING of the Nelson County Board of Supervisors at 6:00 p.m. in the Nelson County Middle School Library, 6925 Thomas Nelson Highway, Lovingston Virginia 22949.

Present: Thomas D. Harvey, North District – Chair
Thomas H. Bruguiera, Jr. – Vice Chair
Allen M. Hale – East District
Larry D. Saunders, South District
Constance Brennan – Central District
Stephen A. Carter, County Administrator
Candice W. McGarry, Deputy Clerk
Debra K. McCann, Director of Finance and Human Resources
Deborah Harvey, School Board – East District
Dave Francis, School Board – Central District
Janet Turner-Giles, School Board – North District
Ceasar Perkins, School Board – South District
David Parr, School Board – West District
Jeff Comer, School Division Superintendent
Shannon Irvin, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Human Resources
Joanne Wagner, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
Tammy Ponton, Clerk

Absent: None

I. Call to Order

Mr. Harvey called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM with all members present to establish a quorum.

II. Joint Meeting with the Nelson County School Board

Dr. Comer presented the following PowerPoint:

School Board Goals

- **Goal 1: Be the preferred education provider and employer in the region, incorporating a culture of innovation and lifelong learning.**
- **Goal 2: Provide a premiere interdisciplinary education that prepares graduates for success across a wide range of post-secondary paths.**
- **Goal 3: Employ and support a diverse, competitively compensated workforce that values professional development and growth.**
- **Goal 4: Provide and maintain safe, state-of-the-art facilities and cutting edge resources.**
- **Goal 5: Foster strong, positive working relationships between the division and the community.**

Dr. Comer noted that these goals were developed in training sessions, were broad, and they strived as a leadership to make sure decisions reflected the goals.

Nelson County Public School Vision



**Empowering generations
through excellence in
education**

Nelson County Public School Mission



We educate students to become skilled, responsible, productive and enlightened citizens who contribute to society.

Dr. Comer noted that these were reviewed when he first got to Nelson and they remained the same.

Nelson County Public School Beliefs

- Learning for all.
- Maintaining an environment conducive to learning.
- Supporting communication, collaboration and teamwork.
- Using the growth and learning process as a critical component of our organization.
- Teaching the importance of mutual respect, character development and diversity.
- Including the community and businesses as key partners in the educational process.
- Maintaining positive and proactive public relations.
- Learning as a lifelong process.

Learning For All

- One-To-One Initiative (Grades 6-12)
- Chrome books, Canvas, Go Guardian
- Net books – grades 2-5
- Tablets – PK-1
- Expansion of dual enrollment and CTE courses
- Fine Arts to FFA

Dr. Comer noted that they were considering adding two CTE courses designed from student interest next year. He added that they had found success in Fine Arts and FFA.

Chromebooks

- Web-based computers
- Easy to use
- Easy to manage
- Easy to customize
- Fast startup; Open and run in 8 seconds
- Information stored on web
- Interactive, student centered
- Inexpensive with minimal tech support needed
- User and management same, regardless of device

Transforming The Learning Environment

- Empowerment – access to digital content empowers students and gives teachers the tools for individual learning
- Access – all students have the same technology, accessible at both school and home
- Teamwork and Collaboration – the platform naturally creates this environment

Maintaining An Environment Conducive To Learning

- NCHS/NMS Security and Safety Upgrades
- Radio upgrades at NCHS/NMS
- Access control entry at all schools
- Grant funding has helped increase breakfast participation at NCHS and NMS
- Excellent facilities

Supporting Communication, Collaboration, and Teamwork

- Performance based assessments
- RRES/TRES STEM Labs
- Google Platform
- Learning to write in order to write to learn
- Redefining classroom seating

Using The Growth And Learning Process As A Critical Component Of Our Organization

- Professional Learning Communities
- Connection between School, Division, and Board Goals
- Continuous model for improvement
- Division Comprehensive Plan

Teaching The Importance Of Mutual Respect, Character Development, And Diversity

- Responsive Classroom
- Mustang Bucks
- Honor Counts (NCHS)
- Bullying prevention programs
- Recognizing positive behavior (Bucket Filler Program)
- Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS)



Dr. Comer noted there had been major growth in teaching the importance of mutual respect, character development, and diversity. He noted that Principles were recognizing good behavior and he had seen a culture change because of it. He then described the wall created by Ms. Stinnett of hand-print pledges to be positive.

Including The Community And Business As Key Partners In The Educational Process

- Civic clubs
- Wintergreen Performing Arts
- Nelson Historical Society
- Rockfish Valley Foundation
- Internship Locations

Dr. Comer noted that they partnered with a lot of agencies in the community and they supplied support for staff and students

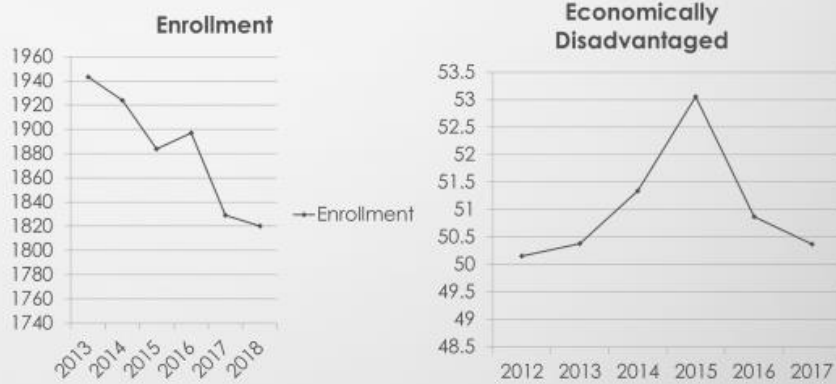
Maintaining Positive And Proactive Public Relations

- Media Outreach
- School Newsletters and Websites
- Social Media - including Facebook, twitter
- Division APP

Learning As A Lifelong Process

- Community Service requirement
- Career and Technical Education
- Internship Programs
- Distance Learning

Demographics



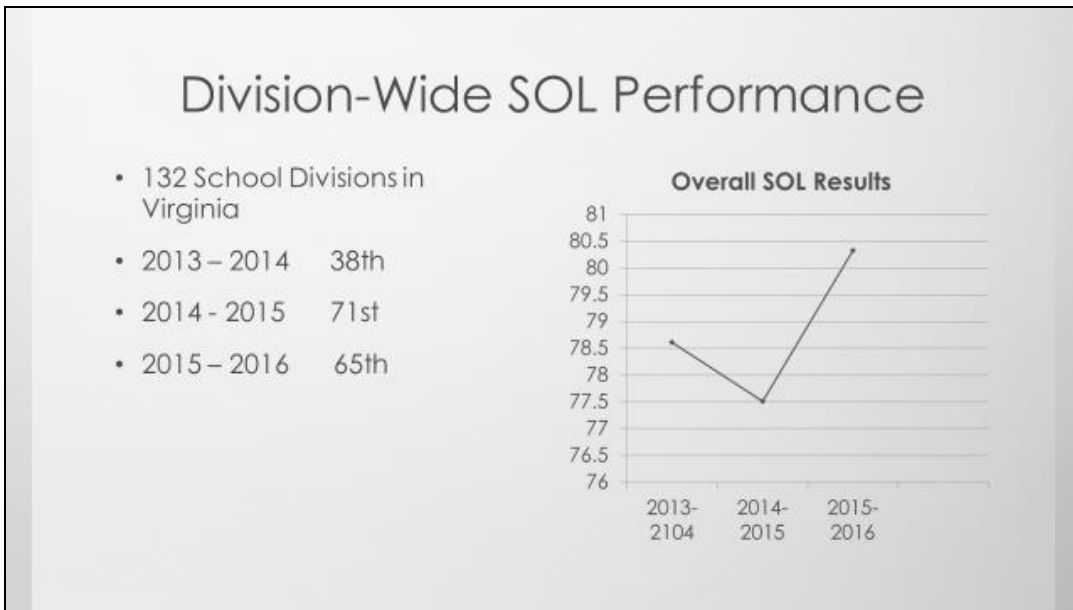
While our overall enrollments are decreasing, our free and reduced population has remained fairly constant

Dr. Comer noted that they were steadily losing enrollment. He also noted that the economically disadvantaged was around 50% and was stagnant.

Composite Index and Economically Disadvantaged

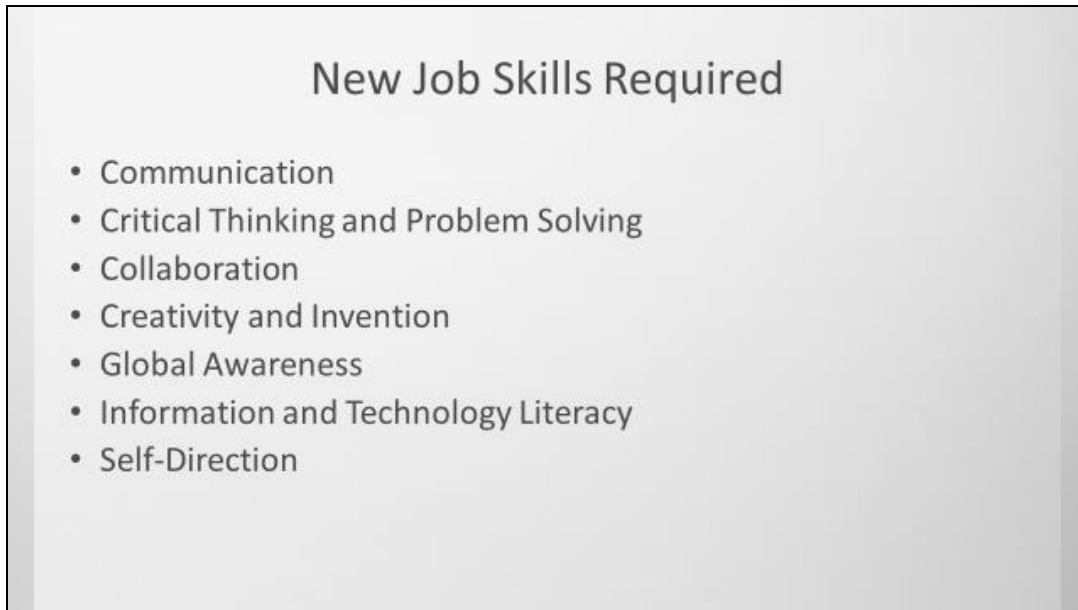
Division	Index	F/R %
Albemarle	.6391	28.74%
Clarke	.5435	21.30%
Fauquier	.5823	24.49%
Loudon	.5494	17.07%
Louisa	.5432	47.04%
Matthews	.5228	41.44%
Nelson	.5928	50.37%

Dr. Comer noted the chart showing the Composite Index and Economically Disadvantaged that compared surrounding localities with Nelson having the highest of both measures



Dr. Comer noted that the difference between 2013-2014 and last year was last year's reading was done on a three year average. He noted a change was that they could give retakes in elementary and middle school. He noted that they had not performed as well as he'd like; however they had improved dramatically last

year. He noted that the overall pass rate percentage was better; however they were ranked lower in the state.



Supervisors, School Board members, and Staff then discussed the following:

State Budget News:

Mr. Harvey inquired as to the State budget news and Ms. Irvin advised that the Senate and House had different plans. She added that more money was coming to localities either way and they should know more in another week. Mr. Harvey noted that his hope was to not hurt the schools in terms of funding, he hoped the Board would give the same as in the past; however the odds of getting more was pretty slim.

Ms. Brennan thanked Dr. Comer for his presentation and noted she was impressed. She added that Nelson Schools had been wonderful for her grandchildren and she was proud of Nelson County and the work done for them. Dr. Comer noted it started with great teachers and Nelson had great kids and wonderful community support. He added they also had great principles and central office staff that supported them.

ADA Remediation and Safety:

Mr. Harvey then asked where things stood with meeting ADA requirements and the school safety list. Ms. Sandra McKenzie noted that they had completed the plan and ADA remediation list and they were moving forward. She added that all findings had been corrected and the documented plan was filed with the Virginia Department of Education.

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Mr. Harvey then asked about the status of safety in the schools and Dr. Comer noted that the security cameras and new radios were outstanding at the Middle School and High School. He noted that they would submit another safety grant for the elementary schools. He added that they had a stringent rubric and they hoped to get at least partial funding. He noted that it would cost \$75,000 to do both schools and the maximum grant award was \$100,000 with a 25% local match. He noted that if they did not get grant funds, this was at the top of the list of their capital requests as safety was priority 1. Dr. Comer then explained that the 36 cameras in place were monitored by the School Resource Officer all of the time by computer. He noted that Administrators could also monitor the cameras anytime and they had a forty (40) hour save feature and were on motion detection triggers. Mr. Harvey noted that these helped to see issues in hindsight; however did not address prevention. Dr. Comer then noted that the kids were aware of the camera monitoring and it did prevent some things.

School Buses and School Resource Officer:

Deborah Harvey noted that they had a number of school buses that were in poor condition and they were falling further behind in replacing them being on the cycle of getting two new ones per year and they were concerned about bus safety.

Dr. Comer then gave kudos to Sheriff Hill on helping them out with traffic control in the mornings. He added that there were usually two deputies and the State Police present in the school zone. He also noted that the new Resource Officer was outstanding.

Mr. Harvey asked how many resource officers there were and Dr. Comer noted just one that was predominantly at the High School. It was noted that he could be called out to other schools which could present a risk.

Mr. Harvey then commented on the number of empty school buses running in the afternoons; acknowledging that they were probably more loaded in the mornings. He noted that providing transportation services took buses; however they had a lot of buses and a lot of spares so they could always say a large percentage was in bad shape. He added he was not in favor of cutting out the early bus run.

Mr. Bruguere disagreed and stated he thought the early bus was the problem, he thought those could filled to capacity, and it would only be 15 minutes longer in the Piney River and Roseland areas. He added that maybe a solution with the declining population was to focus on smaller buses for grades school kids. Mr. Harvey noted that there was not much difference in cost between small and large buses.

Mr. Saunders noted that he sees three buses dropping off one kid in his area daily when he is feeding cows.

Mr. Harvey noted that they had purchased a lot of buses at one time and he asked if they were up to par with safety requirements. Dr. Comer noted that the State recommended their replacement cycle and if they were inspected and approved, the system could run the replacement cycle how they wanted. He added that everyone was running their fleets longer these days but if the State had a mandate that would be different. He then noted that they had safe buses on the roads currently and the spares were safe but they had a lot of

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miles. He added that they did not have safety issues with them but rather maintenance issues. He noted that they could spend a lot on that versus buying new buses.

Mr. Saunders suggested that using capped maintenance expenses to gauge replacement would be a good way to do it. Dr. Comer noted that generally there was a correlation between mileage and maintenance and Mr. Saunders noted he did not agree with changing them out because of age.

Mr. Harvey then confirmed that they had asked for four new buses in their capital budget and it was noted that in the last few years, they had purchased two per year.

Declining Enrollment:

Mr. Hale noted that the enrollment numbers had to do with money coming from the state and he asked if they had any idea if the declining trend would continue. Ms. Irvin advised that they looked at the number of live births in the County as a predictor. She added that the numbers should drop more over the next few years and stated that this year enrollment was 1,860 and it would be approximately 1,851, 1,810, and 1,754 over the next few years.

Tye River Elementary Accreditation:

Mr. Saunders then asked about the status of accreditation at Tye River Elementary School (TRES). Dr. Comer then advised that it had been two years that they were not accredited in math and reading. He added that they were now accredited in math but not reading. He advised that they had a 69% last year but needed 75% for accreditation. He noted that the State was looking at improvement now and if they continued to improve reading and maintain math scores, the State could remove their warning status. He reiterated that their goal was to hit 75%. Dr. Comer advised that they had a new reading coach that worked with teachers and some students, which had made a difference and they were seeing positive results. He related that it was harder to make up for deficiencies in the third grade and easier in the lower grades and they were seeing results there. He emphasized that a lot of effort was going into reading at Tye River Elementary. Dr. Comer then noted that Abby Thompson was working on math at TRES and that had seen success. He then related that if TRES was not accredited this year, they would have to go before the State Board and plead their case. He noted that if the State saw improvement, they would work with them, however, if they were to slide back, that would not be as helpful.

Mr. Saunders then noted that TRES was in his district and he was concerned. He asked what happened if they did not meet the three year accreditation and Dr. Comer noted that the State used to require staff changes; however they had backed off of that. He noted that the State wanted to see changes made and if they had implemented things that were changing things that was good. He added that TRES was very data driven right now and they can use the data to show growth to the State and he noted that could easily be shown right now. He reiterated that the things that were in place were working and they were trying to improve every year at all schools.

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Ms. Harvey added that they had implemented online testing and since they had the Chromebooks, students were more comfortable with it.

Mr. Harvey asked if there were other factors believed to be hurting the TRES numbers, such as home life and Dr. Comer noted that they had not seen a difference. He added that they had the same issues at RVES that have been at TRES. He noted that they could handle when students came in that were not prepared academically; however when they came in with anger issues etc.; a lot of time was spent figuring out how to deal with it. He added that this issue was not unique to Nelson County and was a nationwide trend. He added that if kids were exposed to more violence, it would cause issues. He then noted that at a staff level, they would need to provide elementary teachers with better training if it became a trend and they thought it would.

Pre-K and Head Start Programs:

Ms. Brennan noted that she had a passion for pre-k and she asked the status of it and the Head Start programs.

Ms. Joanne Wagner advised that Head Start was controlled by MACCA and they got grant funds for 33 slots between RVES and TRES. She added that the Head Start program was separate from the Virginia Preschool Initiative Program. She then noted that there was no waiting list and participation was based on the parents' income, parents' education, or homelessness.

Technology and Student Retention:

Mr. Hale commented that technology was a wonderful thing and it provided opportunities; however, when everyone was looking at these devices, it created problems with communication. He noted this was an observation and not a criticism but people tended to look at their screens and not talk. He added that it seemed to him that in using these technology tools, there should be something that said these were not the only way to learn or communicate.

Dr. Comer agreed and noted that with the schools' collaborative settings, use of the devices was conducive to talking to one another. He added that the collaborative setting may be the only formal communication some had throughout their day. He noted that teachers put kids in settings where they were fooled into doing it sometimes. He emphasized that their focus was on reading and writing and he did observations on these basics.

Mr. Bruguere stated that he was hearing that there was no longer a retention program in schools and he noted that if a child could not read by a certain level, they also could not use those devices. He suggested that they have a retention program or mandatory summer school for reading. He added that if kids could not read, he thought there was no reason to look at graduation levels. Dr. Comer noted that their focus whether at TRES or RRES was to get kids on reading level by the 4th grade. He added that they had placed an emphasis on word problems in math and that going back to basics was most important.

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Mr. Harvey commented that he knew some people that did not graduate from High School but were the most intelligent people due to their reading.

Other Budgetary Impacts:

Ms. Irvin then noted that the Schools were seeing some increases in rates of fringe benefits. She advised that the VRS increase would cost \$204,000 more, the retiree health insurance credit would increase 1.23% or \$14,000. She added that health insurance was increasing 8.5%; however they had built in 10% or \$266,000. She noted that they had also built in a 1.75% cost of living adjustment with no step increase for employees that cost \$362,000. She noted that they were \$700,000 short of a balanced budget after these things.

In response to questions, Ms. Irvin noted that they had no control over the first three things and the variable consideration on health insurance was whether or not to keep the same benefit level.

County Budget Status:

Mr. Carter advised that the County was in the preliminary throws of constructing the County budget; however he thought it would be a challenge to balance the budget. He noted his long term concern was that the County was not seeing any significant increases in local revenue sources and that would be challenging going forward. He added that overall revenues were flattening out and there was still a great dependence on Real Estate and Personal Property taxes. He noted that 2018 was a reassessment year and the County would know about values next November. He then noted that a \$703,000 school budget deficit may be tough to deal with but it was up to the Board.

Mr. Parr then inquired as to what kind of impact tourism was having on the bottom line and Mr. Carter noted that it certainly had been helpful and that Meals and Lodging tax revenues were increasing over the past few years. Ms. McCann added that even with growing numbers, the annual increase was \$50,000 which was a very small percentage of the budget. Mr. Carter noted that the County was encouraging economic development and a study of the Route 29 corridor was being done now; however it could be a long term process. He then added that the County's financial position was strong and it had a good fund balance.

Mr. Harvey noted that the County should be in its final year of capital expansions, Tye River Elementary was paid for and Rockfish River Elementary should be paid for soon. He added that the Meals and Lodging taxes has helped pay for that.

Mr. Harvey asked what the Board could do to help as there was a lot of support for the Schools in the County. He added that the County had great kids and facilities and they did not want to go backwards. He then asked what the amount per student lost in state funding was because of declining enrollment and it was noted to be \$4,000 to \$5,000.

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Mr. Harvey commented that Wintergreen was good in that it provided a high tax base with no kids; however it hurt the composite index. Mr. Carter noted that the overall population in the County was declining and that migration was accounting for any increases. Mr. Harvey then noted that the age of the County's population was creeping up. Ms. Brennan noted that revising the state income tax would help things; however she did not think the state would do that.

High School Outdoor Athletic and CTE Facilities:

Mr. Ceasar Perkins spoke to the High School's outdoor athletic facilities noting they lacked restrooms and a concession stand which prohibited them from holding large scale events that could generate revenue. He reiterated that they could not host things and generate revenue without proper facilities as there was nowhere for people to spend money and they offered port-o-johns for the public's use. He noted that they had committees looking at raising funds for these things and he mentioned field lighting being important.

Mr. Dave Francis noted that these things were reflected in the School Board's capital request and he noted he agreed with Mr. Perkins. He added it was embarrassing and the High School should have a better concession stand and restrooms.

Mr. Harvey noted that the Board had a plan to do lighting on the fields; however Title 9 provisions made it hard to fund. He added that in weighing the costs versus the benefits of doing this, it did not rank as a high priority. He further noted that the Board's budget had carried some funds to try to start the lighting project; however the costs of doing it had grown enormously. Ms. Irvin noted that the lights had been estimated at \$336,000 and the concession stand was estimated to cost \$250,000. She noted that the consensus was that the concession stand would be more beneficial. Mr. Harvey noted that the lack of these items was bound to hurt attendance.

Mr. Bruguere noted that he had always wanted to see an aquatic center so every kid could learn to swim. He noted that it would not happen overnight but the Board was seriously considering this as soon as things could fall their way. Mr. Bruguere then noted that it was hard to justify paying for ballfield lights to taxpayers that did not have kids in school.

Mr. Perkins noted that there was an age difference between families with kids and the population that did not have them. He added that an aquatic center would attract them to the campus more and they would see how dismal the outdoor facilities were. He noted that there was a way to sell it to the public.

Ms. Brennan noted that if they could build a pool facility, then everyone in the County could use it. She added that was the one thing she would be willing to raise taxes to accomplish. She added that Nelson was one of the only counties that did not have a pool and Mr. Saunders noted that Sweetbriar had one that Amherst County used.

Mr. Saunders then asked about prioritization of the concession stand versus items listed in the "preparing for tomorrow" list, noting that a lot of money was on that list that could go towards the concession stand or

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lights. Ms. Harvey then advised that their overall capital request was prioritized on the last page of the handout.

Mr. Saunders then asked where the brick veneer was cracking at the High School and Ms. Irvin noted that at the 1970's Vocational Education wing, there was a visible area where water was getting behind the brick and was pushing the mortar out. She added that this had been repaired once previously.

Ms. Brennan then noted she had health related concerns about the weather barrier at Tye River Elementary. Ms. Irvin advised that they were monitoring air quality there and had no issues. She added that they continued to monitor it for changes and had a protocol in place. Ms. Harvey asked how much advance notice would be needed if changes were seen and it was noted there were similar problems at Heritage High School and Jefferson Forest High School in Lynchburg.

There being no other discussion, Mr. Harvey then thanked the School Board for their time and for working together with the Board. He added that their priority was always the kids. Ms. Harvey noted that they looked forward to presenting their operating budget once it was finalized. Ms. McCann asked when that would be and Dr. Comer noted they were hoping for March. Ms. Irvin noted that the work done on the budget thus far was available on the website.

III. Other Business (As May Be Introduced if All Members are Present)

There was no Other Business considered by the Board.

IV. Adjournment

At 7:19 PM, Mr. Saunders moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Hale seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, Supervisors voted unanimously by voice vote to approve the motion and the meeting adjourned.