

The Beaufort County Police Force Committee met on Wednesday, March 25, 2021 at 10:00 AM, in conference room in the Financial Services Building located at 136 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Washington, NC with the following present:

**Committee Members:**

Chairman Hood Richardson  
Commissioner Stan Deatherage  
Commissioner Randy Walker

**Staff Present:**

Brain Alligood, County Manager  
Katie Mosher, Clerk to the Board

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Chairman Richardson called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Walker lead the prayer. Commissioner Deatherage led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Richardson said I trust each of you have had a chance to review the agenda. He said the next item is to approve the agenda.

**Motion:** Commissioner Walker motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Deatherage seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Chairman Richardson said you've each reviewed the minutes, are there any changes you would like to make.

**Motion:** Commissioner Deatherage motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Walker seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Chairman Richardson said we're now moving into the public comments section. He said we will allow all who want to speak to speak. He said there will be three minutes allowed for each speaker, the Clerk will be doing the timing of the three minutes and we'll let you know if you go over.

Commissioner Walker said I know we're here about the Beaufort County Police Committee but if people want to talk about the effects from the other nights meeting is that okay.

Chairman Richardson said I think it's all relevant.

Commissioner Walker said I do too, I think one is connected to the other.

Chairman Richardson said but I do want to make this announcement with Commissioner Walker having said that, the purpose of this committee is to examine whether or not the County wants to provide law enforcement to the County through a police force or allow those responsibilities to remain with the Sheriff. He said that's the sole purpose of this committee so don't get confused about defunding and all that, that's not what we're about. He said we're about trying to improve the law enforcement of this County. He said I'd like to acknowledge we have two Commissioners present in the room in addition to the three of us and that's Commissioner Rebholz and Chairman Waters is here with us today so with that we'll take the first person who signed up to speak.

Ms. Donna Wortman said I'll try to stay within my three minutes. She said the Sheriff's Department was Constitutionally mandated in North Carolina in 1776. She said it is a primary law enforcement agency for unincorporated areas of Beaufort County since 1786. She said I live in Bath and have a business in Bath, when I leave my house in the morning at 5:15 and go to my business I'm the only living person walking the street in Bath. She said I know that doesn't sound like much because Bath is a very small town but as I turned the corner by the grill there was a Sheriff Deputy standing there and I appreciated that because that's not the only time I've seen a deputy in the area at 5:30 in the morning. She said the Sheriff is accountable directly to the citizens of Beaufort County. She said the constitution of North Carolina and ultimately the U.S. Constitution, to which has been under fire for the last five months, the Sheriff's Department not only enforces traffic laws, but they investigate criminal offenses, murder, sex offenses, down to noise ordinances, serve warrants, civil papers, man County jails and courtroom safety and they're right where we are. She said from reading past articles in the Washington Daily News, honestly, to me, because I am just finding out about this and that's my own fault, ignorance is not bliss. She said this sounds almost like this is a personal vendetta against the Sheriff's Department. She said we need an impartial panel to further investigate the pros and cons of a county police agency versus the Sheriff Department. She said I want to thank you for giving me the time to say that and I appreciate what you're doing and thank you for letting us come in listening to us all.

Mr. Shay Brickhouse said first I appreciate you giving us the opportunity to speak. He said some of the topics she has already touched on that I'd like to address. He said one thing that bothers me as a taxpayer of Beaufort County is you say this isn't about defunding the Sheriff's Department however if you're going to create another police force that would have to be paid for by County taxes, you're either increasing tax dollars or you're taking money away from the other funds which would be taking money away from the Sheriff's Department. He said why couldn't we just reappropriate funds to better the Sheriff's Department rather than try to create two departments that would have to work together. He said that's just one thing that I see as an issue and see as it being defunded and kind of standing with the SRO's as I was at the meeting the other night. He said also, I found out about this meeting yesterday afternoon and as I work during most of the day, 10:00 is not a feasible time for most of the people of this County to attend that I think is very important for everyone to attend. He said I would ask the Board to consider future meetings be held at a time when most County residents could attend. He said me, myself, I'm in a position where I'm able to step away from work and attend the meeting however the 40 plus individuals I talked to last night cannot, but they would like to be here, and they would like to be at future committee meetings. He said so we just ask that you guys would review the thought of moving the meeting to when more of the County residents could attend.

Mr. Kevin Clancy said thank you all for allowing us to come in here. He said I would reiterate what Mr. Brickhouse was saying about moving the time for this meeting. He said 10:00 is a tough time for, I think, everybody for this few people here. He said this is a terribly important issue we're dealing with. He said defunding the police, you say it's not, but it is. He said you're trying to take power away from the Sheriff's Department, we elected the Sheriff, the Sheriff is doing a good job and if he doesn't, we will take him out of office, just the same as with you all but defunding the department is not the answer. He said they need all the resources they can get. He said every day they go out and put their life on the line for silly stuff we take for granted, someone stealing a lawn mower or whatever it is, but these guys go out there and keep us safe and the idea that you would defunding or reallocating or creating a separate department or whatever you want to call it, that's politics and the Sheriff needs to be supported. He said all the people that work with him need to be supported.

Chairman Richardson said Ms. Garris is not here, just because you sign up doesn't mean we're going to hold time for you. He said you have to be here at the beginning of the meeting during the public speaking part of the meeting in order to be able to speak. He said does someone, how far away is Ms. Garris.

Mr. Brickhouse said I don't know, she said she was on her way.

Ms. Jody Forest said I agree with the people who have spoken. She said I live in an area where a lot of the Sheriff's Department lives and they're on call all the time. She said there was a drug problem in our neighborhood, and they took it upon themselves to stand up to that and rid us of the drug problem. She said they are always there to help us out. She said when we had a rally this summer, they protected us from the Antifa that were there that tried to disrupt the rally. She said I don't know about the police department, but the Sheriff's Department has done an excellent job just in the few years that I've lived here, and I've noticed that, so I do not want to get rid of the Sheriff's Department.

Ms. Stacey VanHousen said I am still in the, kind of research and development mode as far as learning what this is all about. She said I would like to say that I am in favor of boosting law enforcement and it may be the case that in addition to the work that the Sheriff is doing we need additional law enforcement help in our county. She said I would like to hear more about what our needs are that is prompting this committee to make that motion.

Ms. Lori Norman said I appreciate you all's time. She said as a citizen of Beaufort County I have kept up by watching your meetings and the news. She said basically this feels very personal. She said it feels like a personal vendetta. She said it doesn't feel like us coming together as a County and doing what is right for our County. She said it is defunding our Sheriff's Department, which I absolutely do not know where you could ever think that's right. She said I think it's time for term limits for you guys too, so I think you all need to listen. She said I've watched every meeting, I was bed bound for 11 months so I had plenty of time to see what was going on in Beaufort County and I think holding these kinds of meetings, it feels like you're all trying to do something shady by having it at 10:00 in the morning when none of the residents can be here, when none of the parents can be here, when none of the teachers can be here. She said this is about them, this is resource officers and yes it does tie into defunding the police and yes, it is personal for you all because we've seen how you all treat our Sheriff and we elected him and we elected you all and we can change both when we chose to, that's the Constitution.

Chairman Richardson said is there anyone else that has anything they would like to say. He said we're trying to keep the door open so Ms. Garris can be here. He said we'd like to hear what she has to say. He said as the Chairman's prerogative I will reserve time for when she gets here as long as we all understand that just because you're on the list doesn't mean you're allowed to speak if you're not here. He said you have to be in the room when the period begins but we will make this exception in her case today. He said with that in mind we decided, the Board decided we're not going to go back and forth with individuals in the room, but each Commissioner is going to be given time to state his opinion about what he heard, what he thinks and what this committee is really doing, and I think there's a tremendous education effort that needs to be done in Beaufort County.

Commissioner Walker said first off, I thank everybody for coming, 10:00 is terrible. He said it's terrible for me but in all due respect, I think Chairman Richardson just pulled a number out of the air. He said I don't think there was any intent when we picked 10:00 but if I had a choice it would've been after business hours, so I don't think that was anything to it. He said the other thing is I don't think, out of the three of us I don't think we're complaining about the performance of the Sheriff's Department. He said I think it's fine and I'm giving this a low probability of this even happening. He said my next statement is probably the truest statement you will ever hear an elected official say but in pertaining to Beaufort County Police Committee, we don't know what we're doing and we're here to figure it out. He said this has been done in one or two places in North Carolina and is this something we want to pursue here. He said maybe, I don't know but that's why you're here to try and advise us and we're trying to figure it out too so I give this a low potential for it happening but I know a lot of emotions have started from the other night with the joint meeting that we had and I know that's been said in social media has been said about the defunding part of it but there's so much more to that story than meets the eye and I think it all goes back, if you will bear with me a little bit I will kind of go through it. He said from what I know, and I wasn't a Commissioner at the time but for me it all started back in the summer when we had what's called

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budget workshops and in that workshop the Sheriff wanted to have bonuses for some employees and also wanted to have five additional deputies. He said the Commissioners, always watching the tax money, did not want to add to the tax base for that so they chose to say one or the other, you can't have both, do one or the other. He said they left it up to the Sheriff, they said we don't care what you do. He said the budget was passed on July 1<sup>st</sup>, and I'd like to say if I'm wrong about anything because some of this stuff I wasn't here but if you know different please interrupt me and tell me no, that's not correct. He said so you're moving on and the budget passes this July and back in July we had no knowledge of Covid-19, the pandemic, none of that was anything we knew about so we're moving along through the year and we get to where we're starting to hear about it. He said people are getting sick and the government is shutting down businesses. He said my business was shut down so there's a lot of things going on that we never experienced before and the Commissioners, rightfully so, put in a hiring freeze and the hiring freeze was to control spending and that was, I think, important. He said they didn't know what was going on, they didn't know what was going to happen to our revenue stream, which is very important to the County and so we moved on down the line. He said at this point the Sheriff decides, well, let me back up, if you remember across the Country there were a lot of riots going on and the riots came out about the police who had arrested some people and some people had died and it was wrong and so there was some bad apples in every organization and these people were bad apples. He said so these people died and there were people revolting and there was property damage and whatnot, and it became a popular thing for town councils and commissioners to defund the police. He said this is how they were going to control the police department because they thought they had gotten too big. He said now we found out now that's probably not a good idea and some of these folks have backed up and added money they took away already. He said so this is where we were, so it seems to me, at this point and time the Sheriff rapped himself in the defunding flag and wrote a letter to what we call the Sunshine list which put the media in here and they were here. He said I came to the November meeting where the Sheriff's Department pleaded for those five members and they said that because they weren't getting the five members the Commissioners were indeed defunding them. He said so this is what he was saying. He said now, remember at the time we were really getting deep into this covid thing and people were dealing with that, so I don't think it was that bad to say let's just don't do this right now, let's get back into the budget this year and talk about it. He said but no, it was more of a defunding thing that he continued, or Charlie Rose, the Chief Deputy continued to go with and most of the Commissioners, once again, I hadn't been elected but most of the Commissioners told the story I just told about the budget workshop and saying that one or the other was approved and he chose to do it the other way and most of us said we are going to get back into this at budget time. He said but towards the end of the meeting the Sheriff came in through the back door and pretty much called everybody a liar and that's how the meeting ended. He said well so now we're about November 13<sup>th</sup>, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> actually and we had another sunshine list letter from the Sheriff and in this letter, and in this letter, and I have these letters if you want to try and get them posted or try to get them to you, anyway, in this letter he's telling the School Board he's no longer going to honor the contract that they had with the SRO's. He said SROs are the police officers that we have in our schools for security, and they were put in years ago with a one-cent tax base for security. He said it didn't include the SRO's, but it included the front doors, lockups, if you've been in a school you know what you have to go through to get in and that was all money spent and good because, remember, at the time there were four shootings and we're trying to stop anything and thank goodness we had none of that. He said so we're back to he's decided he's no longer going to provide the SRO's. He said now this is the Sheriff, I saw the letter, he's pretty explicit, we're not going to do this anymore, so the School Board Superintendent came to the Commissioners and said what do I do. He said so we said how about bring the Sheriff in and talk about it and see if he's serious about what he's asking and so he did and in a rare occasion of appearances the Sheriff only came to this meeting between the superintendent and several others, administration of the school board. He said the school board wasn't there. He said he was asked several times are you sure you want to do this, are you sure you want to stop the SRO contract and he said I'm telling you I am sure, I want to stop, I don't want to do this anymore. He said so, thank you very much, the meeting ended. He said then they said what do we do now, seek other opportunities, we've got to have security in the schools. He said so here we go, the school board then started soliciting private entities because there's nothing to do and at this time Charlie Rose said we would be interested in bidding

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on it too and they said of course you should, you may have an in-road that nobody else has because you're doing it now. He said they said we wanted to hear the details to what we need to provide for your services. He said that was the issue and so that goes out and everybody that is going to bid on it is reading it and that was a big list of everybody, I heard, at first. He said then most people fell off and one of the groups that fell off, interestingly enough, was the Beaufort County Sheriff's Department. He said they did not bid on it. He said there were six items on that list that the school needed that they could not do and one of the things that was a real bother to people was the fact that they would pull SROs at any point in the day for any reason but most of the reason was transports. He said he needed somebody to transport somebody to somewhere else and okay, that's fine but the big thing the Sheriff said is you've got to understand the SRO's work for me, they do not work for the schools, so they don't have to tell you they're leaving, they don't have to tell you what they're going to do but if I have them leave, they're going to leave. He said so there were incidents, nothing earth shattering, just typical school mess where they said call the SRO and nobody knew where he was. He said come to find out later oh, he left at 3:00 PM because the Sheriff said you will not tell them. He said now some of the SRO's were much more, they would kind of slip in and say look, I've got to go, I'm being told that I've got to do this, so I've got to go do it. He said for the most part this was a real bad thing that the schools did not like, and this was one of six things that the Beaufort County Sheriff's Department cannot do for the SRO business but that is the reason they didn't bid on it so when you talk about another entity coming in, a private entity, this all gets fixed. He said these things they couldn't do are now going to get done because these six things were pointed out to this company, Allied Security, can you do this, will you have a problem with this and they said no we will not, this is what we do. He said this is a nationwide company. He said they provide security for East Carolina University, Duke University, on and on, so it's a big outfit, it's not just a rent-a-cop. He said so anyway, moving on, so now they're starting, the Sheriff's Department is starting to realize this is serious, they're going to seriously write this off. He said so the Sheriff sends out another letter and this time it's to the Commissioners. He said in it he is explaining how he would occasionally move a deputy out and he would occasionally do this and that was just part of the business but it's all because of the five people that he couldn't get. He said we're not near budget area now where we can talk about these five people but once again, he brings up the five people. He said so now we're at the other night. He said I feel sorry for those SRO's. He said they had a job, and they did a good job. He said I had no problem with what they did but if the man in charge cannot come to any of these meetings and fight for his people what good is he. He said some of the SRO's have secretly come to me and said I really feel short sighted here that he never showed up and spoke on my behalf. He said that's a concern to me, where is this person. He said the Sheriff doesn't come to these things. He said we would love to sit down and talk to him. He said so if this, back to the Beaufort County Police Committee, if this is a, if it looks like defunding it maybe, probably is but if it can get the Sheriff or somebody who is put into the Sheriff's position to talk to us better and to communicate much better than they have, we're going to have a better County with great law enforcement. He said so I appreciate you all being here tonight. He said you've taken out your time and some of the stuff on the internet, you know the internet is a great thing, there's a lot of information on the internet. He said I was sitting down last night; I had worked all day down in Aurora and so I got home, and I was looking at it and I was reading a great article on reptilian extraterrestrials who have apparently had a moon base on the dark side of the moon. He said that was very interesting. He said in front of that and behind that and all around that were posts from our Chairman, and a lot of it pertained to me, about what happened the other night. He said you know, the two articles are very similar, they really are, and you can believe it if you want to. He said I kind of believe about the moon base on the dark side of the moon. He said it even quoted Neil Armstrong, so it's got to be true but some of the other stuff, you've got to investigate it to see if it's true.

Commissioner Deatherage said thank you all for being here and exercising your first amendment right to assemble, your first amendment right to speak your mind and that's a good thing. He said you're addressing politicians; we all love some of them and hate some of them but you're doing what you're supposed to do and thanks for being here. He said as far as the time, if we know in advance that you're coming I'd like to offer that we meet at a different time. He said 10:00 AM is a terrible time. He said it's a terrible time for me, terrible for Commissioner Walker, it's terrible for Chairman Richardson. He said

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we still work; we all have jobs and we're busy and my time is best spent at night for these types of things so we're in accordance with that as well.

Commissioner Walker said I'd like the meeting streamed so you can sit at home and watch it.

Commissioner Deatherage said yeah, and with streaming or recording you get to hold us to what we say. He said what I heard you say is a lot of not supporting the Sheriff and defunding and that we are defunding a very valuable department here in Beaufort County. He said nothing could be further from the truth. He said we support the Sheriff for what he does when he is rightful and we defend him when he's not and there's a lawsuit so as far as that goes, as government officials who are charged with taxing you and spending your money wisely, we do what we're supposed to do as Commissioners. He said that our piece of the puzzle. He said the Sheriff is a very highly elected official, he runs his department as he sees fit, that's what he does, we fund it. He said now as far as the funding goes, last year, fiscal 20/21, we spent a record amount of money on the Sheriff's Department, the jail, and all other facilities under his care so this defunding talk doesn't really ring true with me in any way shape or form. He said what Commissioner Walker was saying, he gave you a long-winded explanation about what's going on and machinations of what happened with the SRO officers. He said personally, I've made it very plain I am not a very big fan of the whole SRO thing where you bring in as many people as possible and spend a ton of money. He said I am a fiscally prudent Commissioner; I will always remain that way, but we had an agreement with the schools. He said an MOU, a memorandum of understanding. He said I know a lot about contracts. He said when you have an understanding, that understanding needs to be continual. He said it cannot be negated by one party or it is voided. He said what the Sheriff did do, he voided a contract that the schools had. He said the schools had every right at that time, since funding was in place and we gave, even I wasn't a Commissioner at that time and maybe, probably would not have voted for that money, it was obligated. He said once it's obligated, I feel, as a Commissioner who is in charge of the monies and the contracts, that we should engage in these contracts rightfully and do what those contracts specify we do and was to fund the schools. He said now, the school board may have many opinions about why they want to go with this other group, but the funds were in place and they wanted somebody else and that's why we're giving them the right to choose who they wish at this time. He said three years from now it could be a whole other kettle of fish, but this is what's happening now. He said thank you for letting me speak, I just wanted to clear a few things up.

Chairman Richardson said thank you Commissioner Deatherage. He said I'll do my thing after Ms. Garris. He said I want to remind you in order to speak at events like this in public you must be in the room at the time the public speaking is set aside. He said as a special privilege for you today I have saved this for you so go ahead.

Ms. Garris said first of all, I am a citizen of Beaufort County and I do support the County Sheriff's Department. He said a police committee, I do not support and here is the reasons why, it takes the votes from me and you. She said we need to be able to vote for the Sheriff that protects our County. She said I can agree with some things with the Commissioners but with this point, we lose a lot of rights. She said in the climate that we're in today, we do not need to lessen the protection that we have. She said we do not need to give up constitutional rights. She said what do we have, and I know this is a beginning process, but not many citizens have heard about this process. She said we need to know more. She said these meetings need to be held where the citizens of Beaufort County can be a part, they can let their voices be heard. She said I appreciate what you are trying to do but the citizens out here are not part of the political battle. She said we're the voters. She said we vote you in and we can vote you out. She said if there's a sheriff that comes up and he's not doing his job, guess what people, what can you do, vote him out. She said yes, I would like to have SROs from the Sheriff's Department at the schools but where are we. She said did the parents of the students who send their kids do school, did we have a say in that move. She said did anybody get to attend a meeting and let their voices be heard, anybody reach out to the Sheriff, because did we know. She said it was like all of a sudden there was a meeting for discussion. She said I go to this meeting and instead of a discussion, we get a decision with no voice from the people. She said

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so I support the people that we elect. She said if I don't support what they are doing I will speak out. She said if I support what they're doing I will stand behind them 100% but I am telling you right now, a police committee would not be a good thing for this county. She said I respect what you're trying to do, and I will be at each meeting that you schedule, and I am happy to hear what you have to say along with the rest of the citizens in this County. She said if we could have another meeting at an evening time when people aren't working and are able to come out, send the information out to us, let us review it, any proposals, if you've got an outline, we'd love to see it because....

Chairman Richardson said thank you Ms. Garris, you're three minutes have expired. He said I'm probably going to take longer than Commissioner Walker did but let me start off by saying, I'm 80 years old, I'll probably never run for Commissioner again, I don't have any reason not to tell you the truth. He said you heard the word probably, but I don't have any reason not to tell you the truth. He said I have heard more misinformation in here and Commissioner Walker and Commissioner Deatherage allude to the facts of digging for the facts, so you know what you're talking about. He said you're getting a lot of really bad information from people who have axes to grind. He said first of all, as a bald statement, this Sheriff has not done you justice. He said he is not providing the service to the County that he should be providing. He said he is autocratic and dictatorial. He said he has mistaken his standing in the constitution in which every elected official has a standing in the constitution of the State of North Carolina, so the Sheriff is nothing special, he's just like the rest of us, he's elected. He said the constitution of North Carolina says the duties of the Sheriff are to run the jail, provide the bailiffs for the courtroom and to serve papers. He said there is nothing in the constitution of the State of North Carolina that says the Sheriff is to provide law enforcement to the citizens of North Carolina. He said what happened historically is that it evolved that sheriffs took this on because it was, you've got the jail and you've got to arrest Joe, so you go get him and bring him in and we'll pay for it, that's what Commissioners said so sheriff'ing as the enforcement of the law evolved in the State of North Carolina. He said one county in North Carolina, two counties in North Carolina do not have sheriff's enforcing the law. He said every county in the State of North Carolina has a sheriff. He said we will have a sheriff when this is all over with, regardless of what we decide to do. He said those two counties are Gaston County, I encourage you to get on their website and look at their website and see what's going on because you're going to be astounded at the comparison between the services that Gaston County gets from a county police department and the services that we get with a sheriff. He said you also need to understand this, the difference between a county police department and a sheriff is this, sheriffs have deputies. He said deputies are the same as the sheriff. He said they have the same powers as the sheriff, so he has to have control of his deputies. He said that's why he can decide who works for him. He said any deputy can be fired any day for no reason whatsoever. He said Sheriff Jordan did a lot of this if you recall. He said if he got mad at you, you were gone, it didn't matter if it was justified or not. He said with a police department, the way the police department is organized in Gaston County is that there's a three-person public service commission that in essence has a lot to do with overseeing the sheriff's department. He said they decide who's hired, not the sheriff's department, the police department, they decide who's hired for the department. He said if there's a complaint against a person in that department they hear the complaint. He said the police chief, just like in the City of Washington, is hired by the City Manager. He said the police chief in Beaufort County would be hired by the manager with the approval of the Board of County Commissioners so now, right now, if you want justice in Beaufort County you have to go beg the sheriff because he's the only one who can make the decision. He said I can't tell you the number of women that have sat in my office and cried and said my son was murdered and it was never investigated and when you look into it, they're right, mainly because the sheriff decided he didn't want to investigate it, or he didn't like them. He said you've got one person, in essence you've got a dictatorship in law enforcement and most people don't recognize that. He said everybody is like well, we've got to be buddies with the sheriff, why is that. He said because you want him to help you when you need help. He said if you have a police department you now need to be buddies with the Board of County Commissioners who have a say in what's going on, a county manager who can make decisions about what's going on in the police department, a public service board who can give you overview decisions in what's going on in the police department and a police chief that you can go to for justice. He said now the present sheriff, the last sheriff was bad enough, the present sheriff ends

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his letters to Commissioners, you need to listen, whatever Commissioners are telling you, you need the truth. He said you're not getting the truth from the Commissioners that you're listening to. He said he ends his letters with if you don't like this, I'll see you in court, stated right there in the letter. He said why would anybody do something that dumb, but he does it. He said it was the sheriff who pulled the SRO's out of the school system. He said the reason he did that is he already had given about 35 of his deputies raises that were not entitled to of anywhere from \$8,000 to \$15,000. He said he did that last year. He said it blew up our personnel system for equality of pay for all county employees and he did it. He said I was the one, I would've voted to remove him right then, but you couldn't get the rest of the Commissioners to go along with it because they didn't want trouble. He said one of the reasons the sheriff gets away with what he gets away with is because Commissioners don't provide proper oversight. He said the County funds the sheriff; it is your tax money that funds the sheriff. He said if we took that tax money and used it in an efficiently managed system, this is the most poorly managed sheriff's department that you will ever see anywhere. He said the reason he has to pull these people with no notice is because there is no management in deciding when runs are made to pick up and deliver prisoners from other jurisdictions. He said it's about management. He said with a police chief you would have management of what's going on. He said when a new sheriff comes in, and this has happened in sheriff's departments, if the new one beat the old one all the records disappeared. He said if you have a county police department you have continuity of operations. He said you have continuity of records. He said you don't have to go begging. He said your child's murder will be investigated, you can rest assured of that because you now have a Board of County Commissioners, you have a police chief, you have a county manager, you have another oversight board that you can go to, to get justice. He said we have asked the sheriff to appear before us about ten times in the last two years at least. He said he refuses to make an appearance in public and the reason he refuses to make an appearance in public, I think, I may not run again, I'm 80 years old, is quite frankly he comes across as a public relations disaster. He said you need to understand what you're dealing with here. He said we are trying to get you a better system of law enforcement. He said get on-line with Gaston County. He said the sheriff has never given this Board a report. He said this sheriff, on the last report, I made so many arrests last year, I investigated so many murders, we made so many domestic violence calls, we made so many drug arrests, we did this, we did that, it has never happened. He said I've been a Commissioner for 25 years, look up the monthly report that you're going to get and annual report that you get from Gaston County from the chief of police, and it is very impressive. He said I just read it again last night, it is very impressive as to the service that he is giving the public. He said drugs, let's talk about drugs for just a minute in Beaufort County. He said I'm being very up front with this, every expert that I have talked to about drugs management and getting rid of drugs, and there's not a family in this County that has not been impacted by this, including mine, says don't keep your people on drug enforcement more than two or three years. He said why, because there's so much corruption, there's so much money in drugs. He said people become corrupt, even good people become corrupt. He said roll them over every two or three years. He said the people, I made the motion to start the drug enforcement unit in Beaufort County at least 15 years ago. He said we added four deputies at the time to enforce this. He said we haven't rolled over most of those people since this. He said some of them have come and gone but the same people are still doing drugs and that shouldn't be, and the sheriff won't make a change for it.

Audience member – That's because they're good, that's because they're doing their job.

Chairman Richardson said no they're not, listen, I'm not going back and forth with you, please be quiet and listen or you will be removed from this meeting. He said how much money, and this is a rhetorical question so don't answer it, did we pay the highest paid deputy in Beaufort County last year. He said I have knowledgeable people tell me \$35,000, \$40,000, \$50,000. He said \$92,000, why, overtime. He said who supervises these people on overtime. He said the Sheriff, he is not doing his job, it's just that simple. He said the reason that this committee was formed by the Commissioners, whether the rest of them will admit it or not, I don't care, is because we've got a disaster, I law enforcement in this County. He said we've got money running out the door, we had an argument with the sheriff three years ago when we had deputies using county cars to deliver children to school, their children to school and we said you can't be doing that and he said oh yes, I can, I'm the sheriff, I have the right to use the county property any way

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that I want to. He said this is Sheriff Coleman. He said so if you want to hear more, there's a lot more than this and you look underneath to see what's going on. He said just because the Washington Daily News doesn't print it doesn't mean that it doesn't happen. He said the Washington Daily News can do a lot better job than they have been doing, although I think the young man who's here today has been doing a good job of reporting things but up until they got him, they don't report this stuff and you're not going to see it in this room because the Chairman is going to choke you down if you start trying to tell the truth. He said he won't let you talk, that's why we want better filming and screening of these meetings because you, as the public, simply don't know what is going on. He said now, we've had no reports. He said he wanted five new deputies. He said the question that I asked him right there is what kind of justification do you have for this, are you making more calls, what's going on. He said we want them because we want them was the answer. He said no, it doesn't work that way, I, as a Commissioner, am responsible for spending your money. He said I have a fiduciary responsibility to you and just adding more people for somebody who has already won the world's worst management award is not what I should be doing so just remember, there's two things going on here today. He said I want you to separate those two things. He said there's an issue with the SRO's where the sheriff did not have the authority to void that contract, it was a contract between the County and the school system, which the sheriff just happened to be involved in at the time. He said he didn't have the authority to void that contract, but he voided it. He said now you've got 12 or 13 people out there that don't have jobs. He said that's not the Commissioners fault. He said you heard this man say he was called into a meeting like a three-year-old or a kid at school, and you say tell your story again and you get it five times and a lot of times it changes every time. He said but the sheriff told the same story every time, no, I don't want to do that, I don't want to do that, okay, fine. He said once we got the word, we did what we had to do. He said it is up to the Commissioners to provide the protections in the schools. He said you can talk about the sheriff doing it or anybody else, but the buck stops up here, so we did what we had to do. He said find yourself some alternative law enforcement and we will look at it and if we approve of it, we will fund it. He said that's what the Commissioners said to the school system, so they did what they had to do. He said I would admonish, with all due respect, to political entities who are playing politics with this, you need to be careful who you're listening to because a lot of you are listening to lies. He said with that, we are looking at this as an alternative system to provide honest law enforcement for the people of Beaufort County. He said I have a feeling, we haven't caught Mr. Big in the drug business in a long time, we need to make a lot of changes there. He said there's a lot of things that can be done to improve your lives so that's all I have to say. He said any Commissioner up here that wants to follow me can do it.

Commissioner Walker said I need to ask one thing. He said help me with one answer, the sheriff didn't want to do this, the school board, because the sheriff said they didn't want to do it, and they were concerned about some of the things the sheriff did and so the Commissioner, most of them, said we don't want to do it either, why does the chairman keep jamming this down our throat that this is the way it needs to be done when most of the parties don't want to do it that way. He said I cannot figure that out. He said please, try to get that answer for me.

Commissioner Deatherage said I just want to say one thing. He said Chairman Richardson gave a list of in between people you will have that share responsibilities with. He said we would not be one of them as a committee if this did happen. He said I'm not saying it's going to happen; I don't know if it's going to happen. He said you're going to have to have four votes to make it happen. He said who knows what's going to happen, but we would not be a committee. He said there would be a third-party group that would be a commission, so to speak, not Commissioners. He said we would still have our responsibilities but there would be a commission by various appointments. He said not only the Commissioners would appoint these people so you would have those folks as intercessors as to a better governing practice if that's a concern. He said but I just want to re-hit, I just want to send one thing out and I want you to understand this, one more time because I keep hearing this defunding. He said it's a popular word so, it's a liberal word. He said they made a, they probably won elections in some sectors by using that word. He said Chairman Richardson is a conservative, I'm a conservative, Commissioner Walker, God bless him, he's going to be one too, when they use words like defunding against us, the most fiscally responsible on

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this Board, that's kind of what liberals would call a dog whistle. He said so if that works for you, fine, you're not understanding the amount of money we have put in that department over the years and then a record amount in 2020/2021. He said if you're going to come in here and tell us we're bad people know the facts, please. He said one more thing about the filming, Chairman Richardson has been a good advocate of filming since it began. He said I have been a good advocate since it began. He said I'm talking about in the 90's. He said a long time ago we pulled money out of our pocket to get this thing started and we hire this guy over here, Randy Walker, to do the filming. He said we would like to have these meetings filmed so your comments would be on record and whatever we say is on record and you hold us to it. He said more access to government is better so if there's anything you can do with the Commissioners, keep yelling defunding, defunding, please ask them to film these meetings that we're having and do a better job when we meet at night. He said we have the capabilities to have better filmed meetings where you can get a closeup, where you can have a split screen, you can do all kinds of things like graphics. He said we've got the capabilities. He said we spent \$144,000 of your money to get all this so ask them can we have a better filmed meeting.

Chairman Richardson said I'll add to that. He said we've got \$144,000 into the video system that's in this new place and that's being held down by Commissioners, some who are sitting in this room. He said you could get a whole lot better quality than you have right now, but they simply don't want you to know the whole truth. He said if it's filmed and on film and everyone else is on film none of us have something to hide from. He said we're all for that. He said it's strange that you're getting your information from people who are trying to stomp down the filming of Commissioner meetings and other meetings. He said with that we will call this part of the meeting in conclusion. He said the next item on the agenda is County department interaction with the sheriff's department and I'll turn it over to the manager.

Mr. Brian Alligood said just a couple of things that are not county departments but wanted to give you an update. He said as you recall at the last meeting you asked that we reach out to a couple of people, the district attorney, had a conversation with District Attorney Edwards, he is in court this morning and was not able to be here but he said he would certainly review legislation and have a conversation with his counterpart in Gaston County, who was actually an ADA in 1984 when that legislation passed and is now was elected in 2007 and is now the DA and he knows him and said he would have a conversation with him about his perspective on it. He said I reached out to Judge Sermons and as you're aware, the way this legislation was written it established the civil service board in Gaston County. He said the member of the civil service board are appointed by the resident senior superior court judge, according to this legislation. He said that was the conversation we had last meeting about reaching out to him and have some conversations with him. He said he indicated also that he had criminal court this week but he too, knew well the superior court justice in Gaston County and will reach out to him and get his impressions on that as well. He said so both of those are underway and hopefully at an upcoming meeting they will be able to provide the information you would like to have. He said the second item that you asked us to do, first you asked us to reach out in Gaston County. He said we talked about that when we talked about the trip and that would be the appropriate time. He said you also asked us to reach out and have County departments come and talk to you a little about their interactions and they're day to day operations with the Sheriff's Office. He said I think all of our departments interact with the sheriff's office. He said two main departments are DSS, and DSS does that in a manner that is a little different than everybody else because of civil processes they deal with and some of those things. He said Melanie Corprew is the DSS Director and she's here today to talk about that and just help you understand everyday operations and what may or may not change in the difference between a county police force and the existing sheriff's office. He said a second department that is here today is Carnie Hedgepeth who is the Emergency Services Director and obviously there is a lot of interaction between the Sheriff's Office and Emergency Services, whether that be doing response efforts on a daily basis or during responses to natural events, natural disasters and those kinds of things, there's a lot of interaction, as well as communications, they obviously stand up the communications center for us and there's a lot of interaction there.

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Chairman Richardson said I just want to say one thing, what we would like to hear from both of these departments here today, of course you can tell us anything you want to tell us, but we'd really like to hear what services you are presently getting from the Sheriffs' Department and what services you need. He said we've got enough controversy; we don't need to sail off into any other directions.

Ms. Melanie Corprew said thank you for inviting us today to share some information. She said I also have Lori Leggett, our deputy director, with me. She said if I miss anything, if it's okay I'll just ask her to add anything she can think of. She said law enforcement and the sheriff's department provide services to the Department of Social Services. She said as you know we have child welfare services, child protective services, foster care, adoptions. She said we also have adult services, adult protective services, guardianship, and we have economic services which are our public assistance programs. She said we do routinely call for assistance and generally it's our child welfare program. She said sometimes our adult welfare programs and then every now and then in our public assistance programs if someone is unhappy with a decision on a case. She said they also provide security for us when we have natural disasters, and we open up shelters. She said also, if we are, when we administer disaster food and nutrition services after a disaster they come and provide security and crowd control, that generally can be 1,000 and 2,000 people and certainly we need security for that. She said I will let Ms. Leggett, on each one of those programs, go into more details about exactly what services they provide for each program.

Ms. Leggett said on the child side and the adult side we serve petitions that have to be done by the sheriff's department. She said they do all petitions for us, serve for us timely, we don't have any issues with that kind of thing. She said if we take a child into custody normally, they do help us if it is a volatile situation. She said during the pandemic everything has been very vulnerable and we've had lots of interaction due to that because of heightened emotions. She said when we need to discuss a plan and we have violence between the party for one reason or another they can stay in the room if they need to but sometimes, we just have them in the hall. She said we have them come for parental visits when weapons have been an issue or there has been something known to us that we have a social worker and children in danger they will come and help with those. She said they also help with all of our IVC, involuntary commitments. She said we have large number of those in this county on the adult side and the child welfare side. She said they normally will stay with the person if we get into a situation and we're at the point where we know we're going to take an IVC they will normally stay there until we receive that paperwork and can return there so that person is not wandering around the streets. She said we also, when we take our guardianship cases into custody, as you know that's getting younger, the population is getting younger so that's 18 to 40 is the population we're tending to deal with, with severe mental health and so they've been able to help us with those cases. She said I think I've already said this but any situation we know is going to turn violent we have the sheriff's department or the PD, depending on where we're at, to be present for those. She said I would guess that on average they're in our agency four to five times a month, maybe more since the pandemic, it's actually has been more. She said they go with us in the field when we're out in the County or in town depending on which entity needs to go, I would say, ten to twenty time a month. She said they also help us with children that are in our custody, wards in our custody that run away and get that on the news very quickly, so we've been very successful in finding our people quickly. She said we've also had numerous occasions on both sides of the police department and the Sheriff's Department when there's activity in the parking lot that just doesn't look normal, they swing in and make sure we're okay. She said that's happened a lot this year.

Ms. Corprew said as far as the child support is concerned, child support is handled by an outside company through a contract that the Commissioners approve annually and so they provide service for the cases Ms. Leggett was speaking about. She said our court cases, child support court cases, the sheriff's department provides service, notice of summons for a all those cases. She said they may have actual numbers; we just gave what we call average numbers.

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Chairman Richardson said it looks to me like the service of papers is what the sheriff would be doing if we had a county police department so the security aspect of it would be provided to you by the county police force if we wound up with that. He said that's the way I see it.

Commissioner Deatherage said yes, they're going to have cars and they're going to have the armed folks and they're going to be managed.

Chairman Richardson said are there any additional services that you would like to have, while we're going into this.

Ms. Corprew said not that I know of. She said we've, I would say we get good service from law enforcement in Beaufort County, the Washington Police Department, the Sheriff's Department.

Mr. Carnie Hedgepeth said I'll be speaking from Emergency Services. He said there are several different sub-divisions of our group. He said first of all, with fire, on specifics, the Sheriff's Department commonly helps us with fire investigations. He said if we get looking past just point of origin, if we start to not put all of the pieces together or there's any concern at all that it could be or we're unable to rule out any type of illegal activity so on the fire investigations general statute gives every fire chief the authority and responsibility to come up with a cause of origin for every fire so that originates with the fire chief across the county and across the state. He said our office helps in coordinating that and then when we go deeper if there's any concern, we have the Sheriff's Office has an investigator or investigators who help us with the investigation. He said if it ends up going down a possible legal track then law enforcement ends up taking the lead roll of that as we go. He said when it comes to emergency management, in our EOC, the Sheriff's Office normally puts a representative that would manage the law enforcement branch so for instance, if we have a hurricane, we will have a member of the Sheriff's Department that works as EOC staff and would work with all law enforcement across the County, being that major conduit of communication. He said also, during our emergency operations center activations there are times when we put a shelter in place. He said the Sheriff's Office is the primary law enforcement that is assigned individual pods and groups that are coming to those shelters. He said lastly, really during disaster times it's the high clearance vehicles, the Sheriff's Department has two of those vehicles, we commonly team with them by putting a firefighter and paramedic on those trucks to be able to go into places so we work together in that but that is their asset. He said under EMS the Sheriff's Department helps us on a routine basis with what we call delta or echo calls, it's a priority dispatch. He said in common words it's just the most serious calls. He said we have potential for life or death. He said they assist us with those calls with basic first aid. He said we commonly do something that's called pit crew CPR. He said if someone has coded what pit crew CPR does is it rotates the person who's doing compression out every two minutes so it's a constant fresh person. He said the Sheriff's Office has done very good in providing deputies on calls across the county when that's happened. He said they rotate in with our EMS and our workers in doing that. He said also providing scene security. He said if we're going to something and we're not sure of the safety of it then if it's in the county the Sheriff's Department would secure that scene and provide us safety as we're there. He said under our search and rescue a lost person is actually, by law, a law enforcement event. He said we work closely with the Sheriff's Department on that, with that once they identify exactly what's going on, we come in, we work under the Sheriff at that point, but we start providing logistics for bringing in the other search and rescue groups for that. He said lastly is 911 Communications. He said that is a different division but it's under the Sheriff's Department and obviously we're very dependent for 911 for our fire and EMS calls.

Chairman Richardson said are there any additional services that you might want if we were to change to a police department.

Mr. Hedgepeth said we've had a very good working relationship. He said I cannot think of anything that we have been in need of that the Sheriff's Department has not agreed to provide for us.

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Chairman Richardson asked if there were any questions from the Commissioners.

No one spoke.

Mr. Alligood said just one more thing, on a daily basis they do interact with the Finance Department and the tax office, so we don't have folks walking to the bank with large amounts of cash. He said they help us on a daily basis with transports and protect our people so that's another interaction they have.

Chairman Richardson said thank you very much, we appreciate you giving us the information and we're glad to hear from you. He said the next item on our agenda is a discussion, I guess, for the board members here of pros and cons of having a county police department. He said some of this I covered in my rant that I did earlier, but we need to talk about that, so I'll turn it over to the Commissioners to start.

Commissioner Walker said government, in general, has a habit of fixing things that aren't broken. He said the question here is any of this broken. He said this gives us a great review to go back and see what it is we don't like because we don't seem to have anybody, other than the Chief Deputy, that we can talk to, to complain and usually when we do complain it's questionable whether something gets fixed about it. He said I would say a con would be fixing something that really might not be broken, to a certain extent. He said the pros would be control. He said I think you've got a lot more control than we have now and if you've got this, there's a lot more checks and balances and I like that. He said I like the checks and balance thing that would have to come out of this thing and so there's one little issue that could go through the system and an answer could be gotten and corrected if we do so.

Commissioner Deatherage said I'm ambivalent about this however I feel charged to listen to all the folks and hear what they have to say. He said also, I want to hear from the Sheriff. He said I'd like to hear from the Sheriff if at all possible, it might be an impossibility, but I would like to hear from the Sheriff in a public meeting setting so that everyone could hear what he said and the ramifications of such and how important that is for the public's access to the goings on and machinations of any changes that could be made. He said but, there are some inefficiencies in the Sheriff's department that I would like to see fixed. He said I've made mention of it in the meetings, I'd like to see that happen. He said right now we have no redress with the Sheriff or his first in control, in command, and it would be nice to have a little more redress since we do act on behalf of the folks that elected us. He said we've heard a lot about we can be elected, and we can be un-elected, well I've been elected three times as a non-incumbent so I'm not really worried about term limits, I'm not worried about ever being elected again so, I mean I do what I think is right and I will always do that. He said it's real simple for me, this is not a money-making job for me, it's not a steppingstone to another political job and it's just something I try to do well. He said doing that job well means we have to look and see how other people are performing their jobs in Beaufort County at all departments, at all levels and sometimes I come up with some different ideas than other folks but that's the way it's going to be. He said now I'm not clear on what my idea is going to be about this whole police thing but I can tell you right now we do have some problems here in Beaufort County and it would be nice to be remedied. He said we have some outstanding deputies, we really do, and I think that's not the problem. He said I think they do a good job. He said I think guidance is important whenever possible because let's face it, deputies are just part of the chain of command, they do the hard part. He said the other part of them being supported and guided, it comes from another rim, so I don't want to cast any aspersions towards any deputies whatsoever. He said I'm very happy that we're busting drugs in Beaufort County. He said I think that's one of the good things. He said I agree with Chairman Richardson, narcotics are the evil of our time and they cause people to do other bad things and think other bad thoughts and I'm very thankful for the good job they're doing in narcotics. He said it could always improve but they are doing a good job in getting people off the streets and getting drugs off the streets. He said but I've gone on, I could probably go on and on and I've probably taken up enough of your time already, so I gave you a window into my thoughts at this time.

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Chairman Richardson said for me the amount of time, I'd be here 24 hours for this thing. He said the time doesn't bother me. He said what's important to me is for people to understand what's going on and what the benefits are and the problems we have. He said we've got a lot of problems with law enforcement in Beaufort County. He said as Commissioner Deatherage has said, it's not on the bottom end of law enforcement that we have problems. He said it's not the deputies, it's not the people that we deal with day to day. He said we have problems on the top end with the arrogance. He said I know for the last ten years, when Jordan was there and this sheriff is there, you make request for public information that the law very clearly tells you the Sheriff has to provide to you, and they refuse to provide it. He said you can't get information out of them, it's a secret police organization. He said go to the city police departments, either Belhaven or even Washington and ask for the same information and you'll get it very quickly because they do what they're supposed to do. He said the Sheriff does not provide information to the public that he should be providing. He said where is his last report of the number of people he has arrested in the last year or the year before and where are the statistics, they are not there. He said that's one of the things that the law provided in Mecklenburg County. He said they're required to produce this information for the benefit of the Commissioners and the public so you can see what they're doing, so you can see where the trends are, so the public can know what's going on. He said our Sheriff, this is a secret organization, he has refused to appear before the Commissioner for more than the last year so the opportunity for more cooperation is tremendous. He said if you're looking for justice, if you had a relative that died in the jail, if you had somebody that was murdered on the street, if you had a case that's gong nowhere, right now you have to go beg the Sheriff to open it and do something and then you probably can't get an answer. He said with a county police department you can go to any Commissioner, you can go to the County Manager, you can go to the Chief of Police or you can go to the Commission. He said the public now would have access to law enforcement. He said you do not have access to law enforcement now. He said you have access to tyranny which says we're going to do it our way and go play somewhere else or we'll arrest you, if you make any move, we'll arrest you, so this is not a good situation. He said the constitution of the United States of America, which everybody wants to talk about, and the State of North Carolina never envisioned one-man rule for justice in any county. He said it's wrong. He said it has evolved. He said it started off as a good thing and it worked real well as long as you had a community Sheriff that new the people in the community, but we've not been electing that kind of people in Beaufort County for the last many years and a lot of other counties haven't either, so they just hunker down and take the beating. He said you don't have to do that. He said the will of the Commissioners, quite frankly, they are worms, they don't have a backbone. He said if they had more backbone the Sheriff would not get away with what they're getting away with because we do have control of that. He said we have control over their budget, we have control of a lot of things but as long as counties do not enforce what they should be enforcing with any official, elected, appointed, whatever, under our jurisdiction, you're going to get what you're getting right now, which is a really bad situation. He said getting the information is very important. He said we have been spending, and don't hold me to exact numbers, but it's in the neighborhood of \$100,000 a year for drug buys in Beaufort County. He said it's been appropriated, lets put it that way, for the last, at least, ten years. He said we do not have a single report, the Commissioners do not have a single report on how your tax money is spent, how effectively spent it is, whether the program is effective or not, we don't even know what the money is being spent for and when we ask, we're told we're not giving it to you. He said well, in order to get that information, you need a vote from four Commissioners. He said four Commissioners won't vote for it. He said they'll never vote for it but if you go to a county police department, that's public information that you're entitled to know something about and every month you're going to get a report on drug arrests and what's going on in that particular area. He said you're not getting that now. He said as a matter of fact what I see going on in the Sheriff's Department is there's a lot of time spent deciding who stays in the drug business in Beaufort County and who's not in the drug business in Beaufort County because all we're doing is arresting is street dealers. He said when are we going to catch Mr. Big. He said we haven't caught him and we're not going to catch him under the present system so the benefits for justice for you as a citizen in this County are tremendous. He said look back at the incidents that you've had over the last ten or fifteen years that involve the Sheriff's Department, that involve not giving people information and abuse of people who have been arrested, and we've had several of those. He said we've managed to wiggle out of them because we have good lawyers,

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that doesn't make it right just because a lawyer let you wiggle out of it, so the benefits far outweigh the problems with this. He said and yes, those policemen, those deputies that are here right now are probably going to be here when this is over with if you go to a county police system because they will be offered jobs in the new department so the idea that we're going to put people out of work and we're going to defund and all this sort of thing, you're going to have a lot better management. He said right now you have one man rule and it's what one man thinks on how things are managed. He said if you have all of these entities involved providing you with oversight, which democracy demands that the oversight be provided, then they're going to be looking at hey, do you have efficient systems set up for making these deliveries and picking up these prisoners or is it knee jerk for what somebody thinks in that moment that they need to be doing. He said we can demand better management. He said we've got cases right now that you're going to hear about shortly that's botched. He said the main reason it was botched was very ineffective investigative abilities at the Sheriff's Department and you'll hear about this very shortly. He said I hope we hear about this at the next meeting, but we don't know, as Commissioners, and you don't know as the public how good or bad a job the Sheriff is doing on investigating crime scenes. He said Allen Jordan would write you a letter, and I don't know if this Sheriff is doing it or not, but he would say we're not going to investigate your case and the reason we're not going to investigate your case is because they didn't steal enough from you. He said can you believe that, and the people have been putting up with this. He said it's time to look at a change and it's time to look at the people being in control of their law enforcement so that justice can be obtained fairly and equally for everybody, not who gave the sheriff the biggest contribution during the last campaign. He said so those are the benefits I see out of this. He said a tremendous reduction in corruption and better local policing because citizens will have the right to appeal for it. He said now, the next part is sort of tongue in cheek, what are the handicaps of not having criminal law enforcement in the Sheriffs Department. He said I'll leave it up to you guys to come up with some reasons because I can't.

Commissioner Walker said I think competition is good. He said there is bad competition, and I don't see how you cannot have bad competition when the sheriff gets to a scene before the Beaufort County police force and are they going to share information properly because they don't want the Beaufort County Police Force to get more credit than maybe them.

Chairman Richardson said the sheriff wouldn't be at the scene, as far as I understand it.

Commissioner Walker said there's got to be a time that he will be if he just drives up on a scene or he's serving papers so there could be a situation so there's probably going to be some animosity there that, between the two law enforcement entities, I suppose.

Chairman Richardson said since you bring that up there was a period of time when the Sheriff did not cooperate with the Washington Police. He said we've had that in the past. He said if you have a county police department it's just a matter of the manager and the Commissioners, or whoever, saying to the chief of police, look we need to do something to iron this out and get better cooperation to get this working whereas, in the past the sheriff arrogantly, deliberately would not cooperate with other police departments. He said you're right, there's a lot of that stuff that's happened in the past. He said it needs to stop for the benefit of everybody in the county.

Commissioner Deatherage said I could go and get long winded about this and still not say anything so I'm going to reserve judgement for a little while.

Commissioner Richardson said okay. He said the next thing on our agenda is we talked about having a trip to Gaston County to talk to those people to see how they do things, to see how it works over there so I'll turn it over to the manager.

Mr. Alligood said I reached out by email to Kim Eagle who's the County Manager in Gaston County. He said they are the only county in North Carolina right now who has such an operation. He said previously

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Mecklenburg and the City of Charlotte had something similar but the combined it, so Gaston is the only one in the state now. He said I reached out to Ms. Eagle to ask her some questions, got a return call Matt Rhoten, who is her deputy County Manager and essentially public safety is in his portfolio so we had a conversation and essentially what I asked them was I explained to them what the committee was looking at and was there an opportunity to come and have a conversation based on what they were doing and what protocols they were under and he said that was certainly an opportunity, that they were taking face-to-face meetings now and the majority of their staff had been vaccinated. He said they still had certain requirements, they're going to require you wear a mask, spread everybody out but they were certainly taking appointments. He said so we can work that out. He said the way we left it was I would come back and report to you on the information and we could figure out some dates and sometimes and work with them. He said what I explained to them was my understanding was this committee was looking at was a couple of areas, first of all from the management side, the management and finance piece relating to how that works in Gaston County and that would probably be from the Deputy County Manager level or the County Manager level, however you've got that, and the finance officer. He said then a conversation, hopefully, with the police chief, to talk about operations as well as the Deputy County Manager, with that being in his portfolio. He said then a conversation about oversight. He said as you're aware, the local bill that's put in place to establish that oversight committee. He said there's some interesting things about the oversight committee and I did ask a couple questions, and I'll get to that but on the finance side, Mr. Rhoten did say just remember, if you do this, you have two agencies who will be asking you for money instead of one agency. He said did also say that when you have a conversation with the police chief the police chief is going to tell you it's the best way to handle law enforcement in the County, it's absolutely the best way to do it. He said he did say he's a little biased so he will tell you that. He said then, with the oversight committee, I did ask him about that because there was some curious, it's rather curious the way this is put together and I would ask the committee to consider that when you look at it, one of the challenges I see when I look at it, certainly don't have any issue with an oversight board in that we have lots of oversight boards, we have multiple oversight boards, they are advisory in nature but this oversight board is appointed by the Chief Resident Superior Court Judge and they have the ability of, according to the legislation, that if there is a disciplinary action that occurs that an officer wants to appeal then they go through the police advisory board. He said there is the opportunity in there that it comes, that there's a recommendation that comes from the police advisory board to the County Manager. He said the County Manager, according to this legislation, can push that back to the advisory a maximum of three times to say how about look at this or how about look at that, but ultimately, in the end, and it's really clear, it says he shall direct the chief of police to implement the order of the civil service board, being the County Manager. He said so ultimately whatever is the final decision it's the final decision by the civil service board. He said as you know, in our organization there are differences in how there's accountability and how there's due process in how we deal with disciplinary actions or adverse actions against employees. He said it's a little different if you're at DSS, it's a little different if you're at the Health Department because they follow the state personnel act so there's some additional appeal process there. He said if you work for the Sheriff right now, the way the statutes are, you work at his pleasure and he does have that singular ability to say you no longer work for me for any reason, any reason. He said it's the same for the Register of Deeds. He said the Register of Deeds has that same power by statute. He said in our organization there's three people the Board of Commissioners has that authority over with a majority vote, the County Manager, the County Attorney and the County Clerk work at the pleasure of the majority of the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Commissioners appoint the Tax Collector and the Tax Assessor so there's some control there but in general, all other employees that fall under the purview of the Board of Commissioners rolls under the Manager so in our personnel policy there are procedures in which if there's an adverse action taken against an employee the Department Head or supervisor initiates that action, there are different appeal levels and ultimately it ends up on my desk. He said if there is a final appeal it ends up on my desk and I have the authority, under the personnel policy, to make that final decision. He said there is no appeal beyond my final decision when it comes to an employee and I tell folks very clearly that there are two things that I look at when I do those appeals. He said I look at due process, was there due process in the way we did things, did we follow the personnel policy to the letter the way we're supposed to and was it just cause. He said was the action taken against the employee

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justified under the situation. He said so those are the two things I look at during appeals but ultimately it is my decision and my final decision, and I am held accountable by the Board of Commissioners. He said once it goes beyond me the PC is court but there is no appeal beyond that. He said that would be my big concern with this is that you have a civil service board that essentially is directing the culmination of adverse actions against an employee that the people who are in charge of managing that operation don't have the final say-so on it. He said that gave me a little pause but that's different in the way it happens so those are the things I would say to you about that. He said again, Mr. Rhoten said they were happy to facilitate a meeting and they would line up things. He said he did say he'd only been there seven years, so he didn't have the background on the establishment and those kinds of things. He said he did say he'd be glad to talk with you, the police chief would be glad to talk with you, we'll have our county attorney talk with you, whoever you want to talk to he would be glad to facilitate that. He said he did recommend probably their former County Manager. He said he still works for them on a part-time basis, Mr. Chuck Moore, he said he'd be a great resource and then Ms. Pam Overcash, who is their former HR director, she still works with them in a different roll now, but they were both in place when this was put all together and he said they had that historical background. He said if you wanted to speak with them as well, he could certainly facilitate that. He said but they were open to a meeting so my charge was too come back to you and say we'll try to put some times together, I'll get back with him and we'll try to figure out how that works and give them enough time to line those people up that you may want to speak to.

Chairman Richardson said thank you, that's a great report. He said before we get into talking about the trip and arranging the trip lets comment a little about the committee of which you're speaking of. He said I understand your concerns, really, that the buck has to stop somewhere. He said it looks like with this it stops with this committee. He said we could certainly rearrange that differently if we do this when it goes for a bill with the legislature. He said it's kind of interesting that in 1957 is when Gaston County really went to a countywide police force. He said it was in 1984, and manager, correct me if I'm wrong, is what they're talking about when they went out and formed a public service commission, the three-member board and it sounds to me like they may have been having some problems with decisions and that sort of thing. He said I don't mind doing it a bit differently. He said I think we need the three -member board in some capacity and don't have a problem with that. He said I think it's a great idea because right now, as you pointed out, if the sheriff walks in this morning and says you don't work for me anymore, you don't work for him anymore because you're his deputy and you have to stop and when you consider that you say that's harsh but the defense of that is if you're my deputy you're the same as me, I have to be able to control you because I can't have you out enforcing the law one way when I think it should be enforced another way or emphasizing drugs today when we've got a serious traffic problem over here that we need to do something about, we can't have that. He said so the sheriff does have to have control of his deputies, just like the Register of Deeds has to have control of his or her deputies, it's the same principal so while it may sound harsh, I agree with it in the case of the Sheriff. He said I think that going to, with the police department I think the tremendous thing in that is County employees would have a different amount of job security compared to what they have now if they're working for the Sheriff because that rule sort of applies over the whole sheriff's department right now, whether you're deputized or not. He said that's the way that rule is applied, and we need to do something about that. He said that is not right, from the standpoint of job security for our employees, they deserve a whole lot better than that so thank you sir and with that I will entertain a discussion about when we go to Gaston County, how long we'll stay and that sort of thing. He said I personally prefer overnight because I'm an old dude and I get tired and if we do it in one day I'm not going to remember very much when it's all over with, so you guys go ahead.

Commissioner Deatherage said as long as we do it in one night, I'm okay with that. He said we could spend both, all day, both days as needed but one night.

Chairman Richardson said let me mention one thing, I had a mention from another Commissioner yesterday that he may want to go on the trip. He said he didn't realize that we were just thinking about the three of us going but with that, with the approval of the other two members of this board, when I make

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my report at the next Commissioners meeting, I would like to be able to invite the entire Board to go if they want to go.

Commissioner Deatherage said I think you've got a consensus.

Mr. Brickhouse said why can't you Zoom them, why do you have to go.

Chairman Richardson said I understand what you're saying but there's a whole lot of things that can be said that would never be said on Zoom.

Mr. Brickhouse said can I ask something; it touches on this. He said if you're going to have a meeting with the Gaston County Police Force could you also have one with the Gaston County Sheriff's Department to see how the two work together. He said I think that would be some good information.

Chairman Richardson said I think that's a good idea. He said thank you, we'll ask the Manager to do that. He said we try to keep these meetings without public involvement once the public speaks but with that in mind does anyone else have anything they would like to suggest or say.

Audience Member – I would say it sounds to me like you're not getting along with the Sheriff and so you want to create another agency. He said there's two counties in the state of 100 that have this system and they're both big counties, nothing like Beaufort County. He said I think if we don't like the Sheriff, we can just not elect him next season. He said that's where the answer is, not to create another law enforcement agency.

Chairman Richardson said thank you for your comment. He said so when do you guys, when are you all thinking.

Commissioner Deatherage said my thinking is when we can get everything put together and I'm going to be flexible. He said we're getting ready to go into budget and getting ready to go into E & R. He said it may be summer before we can go.

Chairman Richardson said I'd rather go sooner than the summer, but I don't mind it if it has to be that way. He said we've got like, in April, we were talking about going in April, but we've got Board of Adjustment in what, so the Manager needs to look at his schedule to.

Commissioner Walker said for me if it's not the summer than I'm for Zoom too. He said the Institute of Government, we just did Zoom and there were people from all over the State of North Carolina participating and it worked really well but there's some things you wouldn't get to see.

Chairman Richardson said or say.

Commissioner Walker said or say, well I don't know, you can say anything you want to on Zoom but I think it's the see that you know.

Chairman Richardson said it depends on how cavalier you want to be.

Commissioner Walker said body language is important and you don't see that on Zoom, I would agree with that.

Commissioner Deatherage said I have mixed feelings on that because there's nothing like being there. He said sometimes, however, with Chairman Richardson as Chairman, it's just a three-member board but Chairman Richardson is a good chairman, whether it be for this group or our entire group. He said people get to speak. He said with past chairmen in the past, the reason I got on this Board, when we were

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meeting with the Assessor, he wouldn't let me speak. He said I was out of town on Zoom, I couldn't get a word in edgewise. He said I think he was just an inefficient chairman; I think we all know that but that's a problem. He said as far as me not having to leave town, I like that. He said it would be a lot quicker, it saves time and I'm not making money when I'm in Gaston County.

Chairman Richardson said I like Zoom, I've been on Zoom things, I don't have a problem with it, but I just think for the importance of what we're doing we need to go there and get our hands on it. He said a lot of times there's private conversations that you want to have that are not going to happen on Zoom, that you would never want to have on Zoom, and they would never put on Zoom are more important than anything else you're going to say or know about.

Commissioner Walker said then I think May or June.

Chairman Richardson said you want to push it off to May.

Commissioner Deatherage said we'll be in budget then and I'm going to be pushing for a lot then.

Chairman Richardson said well, there's only two weeks of budget if you're looking at budget.

Commissioner Deatherage said I would like to see a lot of budget time this year.

Commissioner Walker said well then say after June.

Chairman Richardson said you all are pushing this thing too far away.

Commissioner Walker said to get the budget passed and then we're free and clear.

Commissioner Deatherage said let's try and pass the budget as soon as we can.

Chairman Richardson said it's going to be passed in May, the way it's set up right now, the end of May.

Mr. Alligood said currently the way it's set up is your final budget workshop, to finalize the budget is Tuesday, June 1<sup>st</sup>. He said then we're looking for you to have your public hearing and consider adopting the budget on June 7<sup>th</sup> if you do not adopt it that night, after the public hearing, then we have provided for a special called meeting the following week.

Commissioner Deatherage said well, I'm going to be out of town June 1<sup>st</sup>, sorry guys. He said I'm not going to be able to be here. He said that's going to push us back in June a little bit more. He said are we going to go over the budget this meeting coming up, the budget workshops and when we're having them.

Mr. Alligood said you've already adopted the budget schedule.

Commissioner Deatherage said yeah but as far as getting together after we do the budget, I'm going to be gone that first Tuesday, I was planning on being here that first Monday.

Mr. Alligood said June 1<sup>st</sup>, which is the Tuesday, is when we scheduled the last budget session of the Board to finalize the budget, to wrap it all up.

Commissioner Deatherage said I'll probably miss that one.

Chairman Richardson said the last two weeks in May, what's going on with that.

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Mr. Alligood said the last two, or the last full week in May, May 17<sup>th</sup> is where we have the budget presentation, that's when you've got a special called meeting scheduled on May 17<sup>th</sup> for me to present the Manager's recommended budget to the Board. He said then you start your budget workshops on that Thursday, the 20<sup>th</sup>, when we kick off conversations with the Board about general fund. He said then going into that last week, that last full week of May you have budget deliberations on Tuesday, you have budget deliberations on Thursday and again, back on the 1<sup>st</sup>, that next week, the first of June you would have your discussion to finalize your budget.

Chairman Richardson said it looks like the first two weeks of May or maybe the last 2 weeks in June. He said the problem when you get into June is people go on vacation and you get more and more trouble about getting the right people in the right places. He said I'm not preaching for the first of May, I don't mind any time, it suits me whatever suits you guys.

Commissioner Deatherage said I'm good the first of May and that week.

Chairman Richardson said is everybody agreeable with the first week of May, maybe after the Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Deatherage and Commissioner Walker said yes.

Mr. Alligood said the Commissioners meeting is on the third.

Chairman Richardson said or the second week if you have to. He said I realize you'll be negotiating so we need to give a little more space. He said the first or second week in May.

Mr. Alligood said so I will look into the first two weeks of May.

Chairman Richardson said yes, these guys have agreed to that by consensus. He said the next thing on the agenda is interfacing with the City of Washington, Town of Belhaven, the Town of Chocowinity, and any other incorporated towns like Pantego, Bath and Aurora. He said what do we need to do with them.

Commissioner Walker said consider them. He said I mean, some of these smaller towns could actually benefit. He said you know; you would have an officer assigned to Aurora or something like that and that may not be the case right now.

Commissioner Deatherage said I would just like to speak to that, it's going to be a County police force. He said you could actually sign an agreement to use the facilities of that location and they could just turn them over to us and we could use them. He said I don't think there would be a problem whatsoever for coverage.

Chairman Richardson said the sub-station idea we've used in the past. He said if you are here, and you need something you can come and do what you need to do here. He said would you want to bring in the City of Washington and the Town of Belhaven, since they have police departments, or would you want to bring all five of these in at one time and let us meet with them.

Commissioner Deatherage said I think all five because they may have challenging ideas, for each other as well.

Chairman Richardson said I would ask the Manager for his opinion; he's had some experience in this area.

Mr. Alligood said just kind of thinking off the top of my head, I really hadn't thought about it. He said of course, you're aware the City of Washington has a police department and Chocowinity has a police

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department and Belhaven has a police department. He said the remaining incorporated towns in Beaufort County do not. He said Aurora did up until last year and then they dissolved theirs, so the Sheriff's Office is currently providing coverage in those areas, in those incorporated areas right now. He said I think that's one, I'm sure you will hear that at budget time that they are a strain.

Chairman Richardson said we would make this request to the Mayor or the Manager.

Mr. Alligood said of the municipalities that have managers I would think the request would go to the manager or my counterparts. He said in areas where there's not we would reach out to the mayor so I don't know that there's really that much difference in how you would deal with Washington, Chocowinity and Belhaven having existing departments already. He said I don't know, and I'd have to dig into the legislation, I'd have to ask the question, the Sheriff currently has countywide jurisdiction. He said he doesn't necessarily spend a lot of time in municipalities that have law enforcement but, it's not their primary focus because the municipalities have their own. He said I'm assuming, and again I apologize because I haven't read that too deeply but I'm assuming, that can be a question I ask Mr. Rhoten, what is their jurisdiction inside the incorporated areas that have established police presence already. He said so in Gastonia, how do they, do they have any jurisdiction in Gastonia, do they have jurisdiction in Cherry Hill in Gaston County. He said they do talk about providing coverage in a couple of municipalities that obviously are kind of like ours that don't have their own coverage so we would want to explore that a little bit more.

Chairman Richardson said when you do ask the question these municipalities will then start thinking about what is the jurisdiction and how does this work so you may get some answers back pretty quick. He said are you guys in agreement for asking them to come to our next meeting.

Commissioner Deatherage said if they want to come, yes.

Chairman Richardson said we don't want to leave anybody out. He said anything else that we should consider because we can always put stuff on the agenda and can always get it on the agenda but anything else that you can think of that we need to consider today.

No one spoke.

Chairman Richardson said we're down to new business. He said does anybody have anything new they want to bring up.

Commissioner Deatherage and Commissioner Walker both said no.

Chairman Richardson said we're on to future meeting dates and since this was brought up from the floor about people wanting to participate, let me say this, and I think I speak for you two guys and you can certainly speak if you want to, I'm delighted that the public wants to come and has enough interest to participate because one of the things that I keep running into is people just don't understand how it works. He said they don't understand the benefits and they don't understand that we do have problems with law enforcement in Beaufort County.

Commissioner Deatherage said also there's the money piece and we're going into budget and we're talking about the money piece and it's going to be public. He said we need to keep that out there that there is a cost associated with this and that cost is not scheduled to diminish.

Chairman Richardson said yeah, I don't anticipate it going up either.

Commissioner Deatherage said no, we're not going up, I mean, not from this lofty 20/21 place where they were.

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Chairman Richardson said better management and professional planning. He said professional management should give us better bang for the buck anyway. He said we don't have that right now. He said so when do you want to meet.

Commissioner Walker said 6:00 PM is fine with me.

Commissioner Deatherage said yeah, 6:00 PM is good.

Chairman Richardson said 6:00 PM when, the 29<sup>th</sup>. He said do you want to move it up a week.

Commissioner Deatherage said I don't care. He said the last week is fine because we've got E & R in the middle.

Chairman Richardson said oh yeah, does that fit Mr. Manager, with E & R and everything else Madam Clerk.

Ms. Mosher said I don't have anything on the calendar that day.

Commissioner Walker said by that time we'll have the streaming thing worked out and we can run it live.

Chairman Richardson said the other thing I would like to see is a little more PR and I don't know how we would go about doing that, advertising this thing to who and where.

Commissioner Deatherage said I say we put it on the website.

Mr. Alligood said it's on the website and it goes to the sunshine list.

Chairman Richardson said okay.

Commissioner Deatherage said I get it and a lot of people view it on Beaufort County Now. He said they like this kind of thing.

Chairman Richardson said we've been here almost two hours; do I hear a motion to adjourn.

**Motion:** Commissioner Deatherage motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Walker seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kathleen Mosher, CMC, NCCCC  
Clerk to the Board