

Meeting of the Hoke County Board of Commissioners on Monday, May 2, 2016 at 7:00 pm in the Commissioners Room of the Pratt Building.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

James Leach, Chairman  
Harry Southerland, Vice Chairman  
Robert Wright  
Allen Thomas, Jr.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Letitia Edens, County Manager  
Grady Hunt, County Attorney  
Gwen McGougan, Clerk to the Board

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Tony Hunt

Chairman Leach called the meeting to order with a quorum present and welcomed everyone.

Vice Chairman Southerland gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **ITEM 1. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Chairman Leach stated that a Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement of an Offer to Purchase Surplus Property and approval of a Request for Reimbursement from Raeford Builders for installing a new driveway connection at Stonewall Volunteer Fire Department needed to be added to the consent agenda.

**Motion: Commissioner Thomas made a motion to add the Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement of an Offer to Purchase Surplus Property and approval of a Request for Reimbursement from Raeford Builders for installing a new driveway connection at Stonewall Volunteer Fire Department to the consent agenda as items (e) and (f), respectively. This motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Southerland.**

**Action: The motion was carried 4-0.**

**Motion: Commissioner Wright made a motion to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Vice Chairman Southerland.**

**Action: The motion was carried 5-0.**

## **ITEM 2. CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. Minutes from April 18, 2016 meeting
- b. NCVTS report
- c. Proclamation of Older Americans Month

- d. Finance – Budget Amendments:
  - 1. Fire District fund
  - 2. Health Department
  - 3. Library
- e. Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement of an Offer to Purchase Surplus Property
- f. Approval of a Request for Reimbursement from Raeford Builders for installing a new driveway connection at Stonewall Volunteer Fire Department.

**Motion: Commissioner Wright made a motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Vice Chairman Southerland.**

**Action: The motion was unanimously carried.**

### **ITEM 3. HOKE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPOINTMENTS**

Library Director Sheila Brown Evans advised the Board of Commissioners that the Library Board of Trustees has three members whose terms are expiring on June 30, 2016. Mr. Terraine Francois has agreed to serve another term and the Library Board recommends his reappointment. Ms. Betty Locklear and Ms. Anna McPhatter will not be able to serve again and the Library Board recommends Ms. Janice Kozur and Ms. Barbara Randall to fill those vacancies.

**Motion: Vice Chairman Southerland made a motion to approve the reappointment of Mr. Terraine Francois and the appointment of Ms. Janice Kozur and Ms. Barbara Randall to the Hoke County Public Library Board of Trustees, seconded by Commissioner Thomas.**

**Action: The motion was carried 4 - 0.**

### **ITEM 4. JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS**

Mrs. Betty Perkins presented the Board of Commissioners with a list of three persons to fill vacancies on the JCPC Board. Those persons are: Kevin Caulder, the Commissioner appointee, Shanna Kirkendoll, Youth Council Representative and Benjamin DeNoble, Chief of Police designee.

**Motion: Commissioner Wright made a motion to approve the appointment of Kevin Caulder, Shanna Kirkendoll and Benjamin DeNoble to the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, seconded by Commissioner Thomas.**

**Action: The motion was carried 4 - 0.**

Mrs. Perkins added that the JCPC needs more members and she would welcome any suggestions that the Board has to offer.

## **ITEM 5. MANAGER'S REPORT**

County Manager Letitia Edens advised the Board of Commissioners that she and the Economic Developer have been asked to sit on a panel that will select and evaluate the firm selected for the RFP for the Fort Bragg Office of Economic Adjustment RFP that was awarded to the City of Fayetteville. This study will provide an assessment of the impact on local communities of downsizing the military. Representatives from Hoke, Cumberland and Harnett Counties as well as from Fort Bragg will be on the panel and will share the information with the counties once the study is complete. Chairman Leach agreed that it is important for Hoke to be represented and be aware of what is going on.

Mrs. Edens continued by asking for the Board's approval to have Gwen McGougan assume the recording secretary duties for the Raeford Hoke Economic Development Commission. The prior clerk, Mrs. Revels, was the recorder for the Economic Development Commission and a vacancy was created when Mrs. Revels retired from the County.

**Motion: Commissioner Wright made a motion to approve the appointment of Gwen McGougan as the recording secretary for the Raeford Hoke Economic Development Commission, seconded by Vice Chairman Southerland.**

**Action: The motion was carried 4 - 0.**

Mrs. Edens updated the Board on the status of budget preparation for FY 2017. All departmental requests have been turned in and she has met with most of the department managers. The remaining department managers will meet with her during the upcoming week. Budgets will be entered by the Finance department by May 10, 2016 and the Manager's Recommendation will be ready for the Board's review after May 20, 2016.

Chairman Leach stated that dates need to be set for the budget work sessions to give the Board an opportunity to meet with the departments. He asked the other members of the Board for their suggestions. Commissioner Thomas suggested Monday, May 16, Tuesday, May 17 and, if necessary, Wednesday, May 18. The budget work sessions will be held in the Commissioners Room in the Pratt Building beginning at 9:00 am and going until roughly 3:00 pm.

Chairman Leach reminded the Board that they increased the property tax rate by 2% for fiscal year 2016, which resulted in raising the fund balance to an acceptable amount. He would like for the Board to consider reducing the property tax rate by 2% for fiscal year 2017. Commissioner Wright agreed that the property tax rate should only be raised when absolutely necessary and now, after increasing the tax rate and cutting spending we have returned to a point fiscally where the extra tax money isn't necessary. Vice Chairman Southerland concurred with Chairman Leach and Commissioner Wright.

## **ITEM 6. PUBLIC INPUT**

The first person signed up to address the Board was Mr. William Brown. Mr. Brown said he had questions on behalf of the Rockfish Community Board. Mr. Brown began by informing the Board that, during the primary election period, he relinquished his time during the debates to the other candidates and he hopes that they will give him the same consideration during the general election. He is also concerned that his campaign signs have been removed. Mr. Brown's first question was where an additional \$4,000,000 in tax money came from. Next, he inquired as to the amount of a Commissioner's compensation package and he would like to see it posted online. Mr. Brown then asked why some property taxes have not been collected since 2004.

Commissioner Wright responded that there are properties with unpaid taxes that have a value so low it would cost more to go through the foreclosure process than they're worth. The County Attorney advised Mr. Brown that his allotted time had expired. Mr. Brown said that he doesn't think three minutes is an adequate amount of time.

The next speaker was Mr. Gene Freeman, representing the Homeowners Association of Parkers Grove Subdivision. The homeowners are inquiring about the notification process when nearby property is being rezoned. The County Attorney responded that a notice is published in the local newspaper and homeowners whose property abuts the property being considered for rezoning are sent written notice. Chairman Leach recommended that rezoning applications be listed on the County's website.

Mr. Dave Averette, P.E. requested a meeting with the Board of Commissioners to discuss ways that construction requirements might be amended to make housing more affordable for our citizens. Trends nationwide have gone toward more stringent construction requirements, resulting in higher home prices.

Mr. Russell Walker spoke about the ethanol plant. He wants to know if the taxpayers will ever get the money back that was invested in the plant. Commissioner Wright replied that the County has already collected more in taxes than was invested initially.

Mr. Ken Gregory asked to speak to the Board. He is concerned about there being no discussion of the consent agenda items, nor are the minutes of the prior meeting made available and read aloud. The County Attorney replied that the minutes belong to the Board until approved. Once approved, the minutes are made public.

Chairman Leach said that, since the Board had opened the floor, if anyone else had anything to say they should come forward.

Mr. Cliff Overby asked for clarification of items on the consent agenda.

Ms. Renate Dahlin asked about the finding in the recent audit. Have the findings been explained? Why were funds moved? The County Manager responded that the County is paid 26 times per year and, in order for departments to avoid going over budget, funds must be accrued in advance. Also, the Budget Ordinance for FY 2016 was composed by department rather than

by unit, such as public safety, human services, etc. Each department is considered an individual entity.

Mr. Cliff Overby expressed concern that the LGC letter regarding the 2015 audit findings has not been made public. Chairman Leach responded that the letter is public record. Mr. Overby continued by saying that the meeting minutes are not transparent. The County Attorney said that the Public Input session is for comments only.

## **ITEM 7. CLOSED SESSION**

**Motion: Commissioner Thomas made a motion to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel, North Carolina General Statutes §153A-98 & §143-318.11(a)(1)&(6), seconded by Commissioner Wright.**

**Action: The motion was unanimously carried.**

No action was taken during the closed session.

**Motion: Vice Chairman Southerland made a motion to come out of closed session and go back into regular session, seconded by Commissioner Thomas.**

**Action: The motion was unanimously carried.**

**Motion: Vice Chairman Southerland made a motion to add a discussion regarding HATS funding and a discussion regarding Timmons Group to the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Thomas.**

**Action: The motion was unanimously carried.**

## **ITEM 8. DISCUSSION REGARDING HATS FUNDING**

Ms. Nancy Thornton came before the Board to discuss the 5339 FTA grant that has been opened up for the State of North Carolina and will be available to transportation programs in the Hoke/Cumberland region in fiscal year 2017-2018. The grant requires a 20% match by the County. Ms. Thornton said that these funds could be used toward a new facility for the department. The cost of the building would be approximately \$1,980,000, with the County's 20% match being \$396,000. The six acre site for the building has a tax value of \$134,000 and can be used in kind toward the County's 20%. To begin the process, the County needs to provide a letter committing to the entire 20% total of \$396,000.

Vice Chairman Southerland met with Joel Strickland of the Fayetteville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) and Raeford Mayor McNeill to discuss the lack of FAMPO support for Hoke County. He stated that much of these type funds are going to Cumberland and

Robeson Counties, with Hoke County receiving nothing. As a result of that meeting, Vice Chairman Southerland believes that Hoke County has a very good chance of receiving grant funds.

Chairman Leach said that the County needs to go forward and send the letter of support and pursue the available grant money.

**Motion: Commissioner Wright made a motion to send the letter of commitment for the 20% County match for the FTA Grant, seconded by Vice Chairman Southerland.**

**Action: The motion was unanimously carried.**

Vice Chairman Southerland said that, during a discussion with a Raeford City Council member, he learned that there might be FAMPO grant funds available for the construction and placement of bus stops throughout the city and county. He encouraged Ms. Thornton to look into this.

## **ITEM 9. TIMMONS GROUP SITE IDENTIFICATION STUDY**

The County Manager said the Site Identification Study that will be conducted by the Timmons Group will cost \$10,000. The cost will be divided equally between the County, the City, NC Southeast Regional Economic Development Partnership and Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad.

**Motion: Commissioner Wright made a motion for the Board to approve the \$2500 County's portion of the cost of the Site Identification Study, seconded by Vice Chairman Southerland.**

**Action: The motion was unanimously carried.**

## **ITEM 10. RECESS**

There being no further business to come before the Hoke County Board of Commissioners, Vice Chairman Thomas made a motion to recess until 9:00 am Monday, May 16, 2016, seconded by Vice Chairman Southerland. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting was recessed at 8:00 p.m.



be held on June 7, 2016. For that election all voting sites and one-stop will be open. For 2017, she has left most of her expenditures the same as in 2016. The Elections Board requested that the Voting Machine Tech position be made full time, effective July 1, 2016. Commissioner Hunt asked what the Voting Machine Tech's responsibilities are. Mrs. Shook said that they are responsible for the inventory and maintenance of all equipment. Also, on Election Day, they check all machines on-site to make sure they are operating accurately.

**Register of Deeds-Camille Hurst:** Chairman Leach asked Mrs. Hurst how she expects the year to end with regard to the current year budget. Mrs. Hurst said the department is in line with the current year budget, only needing to transfer funds to increase the supplies line item. She is requesting an increase in her supplies line item for 2017. She is also asking for a part-time person to work 3 hours per day. This is due to the growth in the county adding more work for her staff. She also believes the extra person would be beneficial to the safety of the office, ensuring that there's always at least two people in the office. Mrs. Hurst is also considering offering an e-file service.

**Tax Assessor-Jennie Gibson:** Mrs. Gibson said that her requested budget for 2017 will be similar to her budget for 2016, with a few exceptions. The Tax Assessor's office had one position eliminated so the current Tax Assistant has all the listing responsibilities as well as all the data entry. Mrs. Gibson is requesting that the Tax Assistant position be reclassified to a Listing Supervisor. Mrs. Edens suggested that the position be reclassified to a Tax Assistant II since there are no direct supervisory responsibilities. Commissioner Hunt asked Mrs. Gibson how much this reclassification would cost and Mrs. Gibson replied that the amount would be around \$1480/year. Mrs. Gibson added that she is requesting an increase in Professional Services. The Tax Collections department wants to send bills to everyone regardless of whether or not they have their taxes escrowed in with their mortgage bill resulting in an additional 7,000 bills, thereby increasing their printing costs. An additional \$10,000 is being added to the 2017 budget to cover legal fees associated with any valuation appeals. Also, the next revaluation is in 2022. Mrs. Gibson suggested that the county begin budgeting for that. The last one cost the county approximately \$320,000. The next one in 2022 may cost as much as \$400,000.

**Tax Collections-Daphne Dudley:** Chairman Leach said it appears that the year will end on a good note for Tax Collections. Commissioner Hunt asked Mrs. Dudley how many employees she has. Mrs. Dudley replied that there are three employees and herself. Mrs. Dudley said that she'd like to request a salary increase for herself and two of her tax clerks. These clerks took on more duties when their fourth clerk was moved to DMV. These two clerks also have passed all the necessary courses to become Deputy Tax Collectors. The department has worked hard the past year to increase the tax collection rate. Commissioner Hunt asked about why there isn't a salary increase for the third clerk. Mrs. Dudley replied that the person in that position had not received any certifications.

**Commissioner Thomas arrived.**

**Cooperative Extension-Howard Wallace:** Cooperative Extension has ten full-time employees. The County's share of the 4-H person's salary will increase. The travel line is also increasing.

Cathy Brown has won her Association's award and she is finalist for a national award and there needs to be money available for her to go receive that award.

**Library-Sheila Brown Evans:** Ms. Evans said that with the oil furnace at the library being replaced with a gas furnace and with CP&L replacing the lighting as a result of a grant, the electricity bill for the library has reduced by \$3,000-\$4,000 from what it was at the same time last year. Natural gas is roughly half the price of fuel oil. Ms. Evans is requesting slightly less in electricity funds and heating oil funds for next year. The carpet in the library conference room has large stains, so the library is requesting \$6,137 to replace the flooring in 2017. The remand for the Sandhills Regional Library System is increasing from \$8,200 this year to \$10,000 in 2017. And the Bookmobile is expected to be refurbished and ready by the middle of FY 2017, so the library needs to budget for six months of maintenance. The Bookmobile will be owned by the Friends of the Library until it is ready to use, then it will transfer to the County. Ms. Evans said she isn't sure if the library itself will pay to insure the Bookmobile or if it will fall under the County's pool.

**Economic Development-Don Porter:** There's no increase in the FY 2017 budget. The County is partnering with the City, SEDC and Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad in contracting the Timmons Group to do a site search. The Industrial Site is seeing lots of traffic. Mr. Porter recommends putting together a transition team to find an Economic Development Director when Mr. Porter departs.

**Solid Waste-Don Russell:** Chairman Leach said it looks like the current year will end with a surplus for Solid Waste. Mr. Russell said that it looks like revenues are on track. Mr. Russell said that Solid Waste will need a roll-off truck in FY 2018. A dump truck and pickup will need to be replaced soon. They're seeing lots of traffic at the Rockfish site.

**DMV-Sabrina Gessler:** Looks like department will meet projected revenues this year. In 2017 they need an increase in credit card charges. Mrs. Gessler would like to reclassify one employee in order to get both employees on the same grade on the pay scale. Mrs. Edens said that Public Buildings has included funds in their budget to install a glass window for separation between the employees and the public.

**Soil Conservation-James Warner:** 2017 budget is largely the same as the 2016 budget. Increased training and education funds for work with the school system. Would like to have office space downstairs.

**Public Buildings-James Tedder:** FY 2016 will end with a small surplus. The requested budget for 2017 will add back some of the projects that were omitted in 2016. Plan to switch Pratt Building and Literacy to natural gas. Other county buildings that aren't switched over do not have natural gas lines available.

Commissioner Hunt said that he has been approached about changing the name of the Blue Springs Community Building in South Hoke to the James Albert Hunt Community Building. How do they begin this process? Chairman Leach said that they need to request to be on the agenda and bring the request before the Board.

Mrs. Edens began a discussion regarding the rental of community buildings. To date, no fees or deposits have been charged to users of the buildings except for the Rockfish Community Building. Often those buildings are left unclean or in disrepair after they are used. This requires County employees to go check the buildings and clean them or repair anything has been damaged. Mrs. Edens proposes charging a refundable deposit for the rental of all community buildings. If building is used on a recurring basis we'd keep the deposit on hand as a standing deposit. Commissioner Hunt suggested that all community building rentals be handled by the Parks & Recreation Department since they are set up to handle money.

**Motion: Commissioner Hunt made a motion that the rental of all community buildings be managed by the Parks and Recreation Department and that a refundable deposit of \$100 be charged for each rental. Additionally if an organization uses a building on a recurring basis, their deposit will remain with the County until they no longer used the building. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Wright.**

**Action: The motion was approved unanimously.**

Commissioner Wright began a discussion of the inadequate parking at the 211 Sports Complex. What can be done to expand the parking area? Mr. Tedder replied that he had previously obtained an estimate to pave the gravel portion of the parking area and that price was \$37,500. Commissioners Wright and Hunt agreed that paving wouldn't solve the problem. Can that portion of the parking area be expanded and paved? Mr. Tedder said that there is room toward the back of the property. The County owns all the way back to the woods. Commissioner Wright asked Mr. Tedder to get a quote on what that would cost the county. Commissioner Thomas asked what the funds requested for repairs to the Courthouse were for. Mr. Tedder replied that the County and City are partnering to replace the sidewalks at the Courthouse. Funds are also included in the 2017 budget to repair the exterior of the Probation & Parole Building and overtime funds are increased to allow for work that is done outside normal work hours.

**Vice Chairman Southerland arrived.**

**Utilities-Hilton Villines and Mike Dean:** Chairman Leach asked how the department expects the year to end. Allison Walters said there will be some budget transfers but Utilities won't finish in the negative. Chairman Leach then asked if all the projects planned for 2016 are complete. Mike Dean answered that the McCain elevated tank needs to be emptied so that it can be cleaned. Waiting on a response from NC Dept. of Corrections before they can proceed. Mr. Dean began the discussion of the 2017 budget by explaining that additional positions will be needed due to the addition of the wastewater treatment plant (one full-time) and collections system (two full-time). In addition, with regard to the wastewater treatment plant, there were items omitted from the design that need to be added: The filter building is not enclosed and needs a crane inside and the back of the blower building needs to be enclosed. An automatic bar rake is needed as well as additional storage space. Chairman Leach asked about the status of the

digester issue. Mr. Dean said that they need the digester emptied so that the necessary repairs can be made. They are trying to work out an agreement with PWC to accept the sludge.

Chairman Leach asked about the status of the water supply. Mr. Dean responded that LKC Engineering is doing a needs study and the Vass Road well is almost ready to come online. Chairman Leach asked Hilton Villines what he foresees for the future of the Utilities Department. Mr. Villines said that he would like to implement technology, such as laptops, to make the operations more efficient. He also said he is very concerned with safety. Commissioner Southerland asked what the projected revenues for the current year are. Mrs. Walters replied that for water the projected revenue is \$5,373,000. For sewer the projected revenue is \$2,454,475. Of this, \$1,154,475 is from fund balance. Mr. Dean said that they are considering adding an employee to work on the GIS/GPS for the system. Mrs. Edens responded that the Communications Department may be adding a grant-funded position that could assist Utilities in that capacity. Additionally, Utilities needs to replace three vehicles that have over 150,000 miles and need new vehicles to assign to sewer collections and the wastewater treatment plant.

Vice Chairman Southerland asked about the status of the private roads committee. Mr. Dean said that they are waiting for estimates from Jonathan Locklear, P.E. Vice Chairman Southerland said he'd like to see these funds included in the 2017 budget.

**Health-Helene Edwards:** The Health Department expects to need to do some budget transfers before the end of FY 2016. \$355,000 in expected Medicaid Cost Settlement funds have not been received. For 2017, projected expenditures total \$3,303,024. Revenues from State reimbursements, service fees and Medicaid are anticipated to be \$1,855,328. Requests for 2017 include reclassifications of the Administrative Officer to Business Officer and a Processing Assistant III to Processing Assistant IV. An increase in Professional Services is needed because the Health Department is currently contracting with Physicians Solutions to fill in for the two vacant Provider positions. Health would also like to reopen a Nurse 1 position. Funds are also included for a Ford Focus to be used for travel to conferences and training. Commissioner Hunt asked if the State sends the Medicaid Cost Settlement money, will that reduce the amount that must be funded by the County. Mr. Ferguson confirmed that it would.

**Hoke County Schools-Dr. Williamson, Bob Barnes, Wanaa Chavis:** Dr. Williamson began by updating the Board on the accomplishments by the school system in FY 2016. The school system saw a 27% reduction in energy costs by changing out lighting and converting schools to natural gas where available. Renovations at Upchurch Elementary and Hoke High School were completed. Both Sandy Grove Elementary and Sandy Grove Middle are tied in to the county sewer system. Seven Hoke County schools have 100% free lunches.

For FY 2017 the school system is asking for \$586,331 in funding for the Technology 1:1 Initiative. These funds will provide iPads or Chromebooks (based upon grade level) to every student in the Hoke County school system. The lease price averages to \$67 per student per device per year. In 2017 the State will not fund any traditional school books, so the move to technology is necessary. Instead of building computer labs, the schools will use carts to move the devices from classroom to classroom. The State will allow school systems to convert

textbook funds. The schools would like to have Wi-Fi coverage in all classrooms and Wi-Fi availability on school buses.

Also in 2017, funds are requested for the following capital projects:

- Upchurch Elementary-\$88,500 for renovations to the Pre-K section of the school,
- Turlington-\$266,000 for renovations to classrooms, door replacement and construction of a covered walkway,
- Hoke High-\$220,148 to repair the gym floor, replace the telephone system and brick the Horticulture classroom,
- East Hoke Middle-\$86,000 to replace the telephone system,
- Hawkeye-\$16,000 to replace A/C window units,
- Scurlock-\$40,000 to replace the gym floor,
- West Hoke Elementary-\$40,000 to replace the gym floor,
- Spanco Building-\$190,975 to purchase a freezer to facilitate bulk purchases and construct a loading dock,
- \$50,000 for system-wide furniture, and
- \$65,000 for portable classroom leases.

Ms. Wanaa Chavis stated that current funding is \$542 per child. In addition to the traditional elementary, middle and high schools, there are eight charter schools in Hoke County with an enrollment of roughly 350 students. The 2017 request will increase the funding per child to \$550.

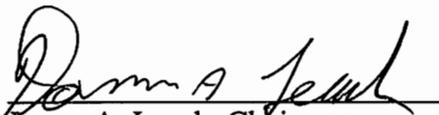
Dr. Williamson told the Board that emphasis will be placed on Career & Technical Sciences, including Health Sciences, Horticulture, Emergency Management and Animal Services. Additionally, greater emphasis will be placed on STEM in the middle schools and CTE in high school.

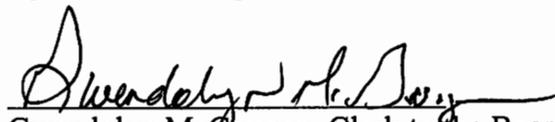
Chairman Leach asked about the status of the high school expansion to a third campus. Commissioner Hunt suggested that a firm be selected for the design phase. Then, once the Boards of Commissioners and Education are satisfied, the process of bidding for construction can begin. Dr. Williamson told the Board that they are in a better position now to know what is needed in a high school.

## ITEM 10. ADJOURN

Chairman Leach thanked everyone for attending.

There being no further business to come before the Hoke County Board of Commissioners, Vice Chairman Southerland made a motion to adjourn seconded by Commissioner Hunt. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

  
James A. Leach, Chairman

  
Gwendolyn McGougan, Clerk to the Board