

**MINUTES OF BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'  
SPECIAL MEETING OF OCTOBER 11, 2018 AT 5 P.M.**

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**BE IT REMEMBERED:** That the Board of Commissioners met in a special meeting on October 11, 2018, in the Commission Chambers, 200 College Street, Room 326 in downtown Asheville, North Carolina at 5 p.m. where and when the following business was transacted:

The Chairman called the meeting to order with the following members present:

Brownie Newman, Chairman  
Mike Fryar, Vice Chair  
Joe Belcher, Commissioner  
Ellen Frost, Commissioner  
Jasmine Beach-Ferrara, Commissioner  
Robert Pressley, Commissioner  
Al Whitesides, Commissioner

Staff present: George Wood, Interim County Manager; Stacey Woody, Deputy Clerk to the Board

Chairman Newman called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Chairman Newman introduced Bob Slavin and Barbara Lipston of Slavin Management Consultants.

Mr. Slavin reported that Slavin Management Consultants has drafted a job description and an announcement, but they want more input from the Commissioners before they post it. He asked for the Board's input on characteristics they would like to see in the new county manager, including issues they need to be able to face, type of communication skills, etc.

Mr. Slavin asked the Board to suggest some community attributes that would make a candidate want to move to Buncombe County.

Commissioner Fryar responded that he felt like they didn't receive enough input from the community and the avenues of input for this particular project failed.

Commissioner Belcher said that he wants a manager that is able to connect with the citizens. He felt that citizen turnout for the input sessions was low because we have a busy community. A great manager will learn the county dynamics and understand the different voices to make sure they are heard.

Commissioner Frost said Buncombe County is extraordinary because there is something for everyone here and the county is on the upswing. Some challenges that we face are traffic, and zoning. The bar is set pretty low for a new manager – someone who is not a thief.

Commissioner Whitesides said the advantages to coming here are it is a good place to live with access to good education and good health care. Our county seat, Asheville, is known all over the world. Economically, the county goes from one extreme to another and the cost of living is high. He would like to make sure that applicants know we expect him/her to live in Buncombe County.

Commissioner Beach-Ferrara said there are lots of recreation opportunities for all ages, in this beautiful, natural environment. One strength is the county staff – a new manager should give them room to lead. Someone who is excited about our strategic priorities and can work with a bi-partisan Commission and who will represent all communities.

Commissioner Pressley said they will need to have thick skin because the County Manager takes the blame a lot, and what happened with the last County Manager will be reflected on them. They need to be prepared for changes, and want to come here because they want what is best for the County.

Chairman Newman underscored the fact that Buncombe County is a very diverse community and that only one third of the citizens live within the city limits. There are lots of rural as well as urban areas, and it needs to be someone who can relate to all citizens.

Mr. Slavin asked what percentage of the unincorporated areas the county is providing direct services for, and Chairman Newman responded that it is one third. Commissioner Belcher mentioned the challenges we have with topography.

Ms. Lipston asked the Board what kind of leadership style the County Manager should have.

Commissioner Whitesides said that we need someone that can communicate with everyone – from the citizens who live in Biltmore Forest to the ones who live in rural areas such as Sandy Mush.

Commissioner Belcher would like someone who will answer the phone and talk to the citizens, listen to their problem or idea, and refer them to the correct department.

Commissioner Beach-Ferrara would like someone who has a good relationship and communicates well with the municipalities located in Buncombe County, as well as our neighboring counties.

Commissioner Fryer thinks all of these are great ideas, but the biggest problem he sees is that the citizens no longer trust the Board, and he thinks the Board needs to be careful in their actions and the County Manager needs to look at everything.

Chairman Newman said we need a dynamic leader who is all these things.

Commissioner Whitesides said we need a visionary; someone who going forward will do a better job of planning and looking at controlling costs. The person has to have experience – we don't want to train anyone.

Commissioner Beach-Ferrara agreed and said we need someone who will lead the staff into the next chapter.

Commissioner Frost added that the County has a great staff, we just need honest leadership. The rest of the Board members agreed.

Ms. Lipston asked the Board what type of person they envision as the face of the County.

Commissioner Newman said someone who takes a more active role in engaging the community.

Commissioner Pressley said the constituents and employees want someone that they can trust.

Commissioner Belcher wants more County Manager reports.

Commissioner Whitesides said it has to be someone the Board can trust.

Mr. Slavin reported that the next steps in the process is to finish the profile of the County Manager, get approval and placement of the announcement. He feels the entire process will take approximately 90 days or maybe less, and they will definitely meet their goal of having a hire by the end of February.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

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STACEY WOODY, DEPUTY CLERK

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BROWNIE NEWMAN, CHAIRMAN