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Communitywide Meeting #2

PROJECT MCPS Gaithersburg Capacity Study

Montgomery County Public Schools, MD

ARCHITECT'S PROJECT NO. 546134

<u>DATE AND LOCATION</u> Tuesday, April 28, 2015

PRESENT For Montgomery County Public Schools, MD

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For Moseley Architects

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DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss/review the completed Gaithersburg Capacity Study presentations and what the time line and next steps are in the process.

- 1. Ms. Julie Morris performed introductions and began the meeting by giving an overview of the Capacity Study process and how it relates to the Gaithersburg cluster. She reviewed the four sites that have been analyzed as part of this study; Rosemont ES, Washington Grove ES, Laytonsville ES and Goshen ES. She explained that both Summit Hall and Strawberry Knoll ES have already had studies performed and will be taken along with this study as information for the BOE and Superintendent to make recommendations from. Gaithersburg ES is not being considered for any addition or revitalization expansion because it is already at full build-out for a 740 core capacity and the site is not conducive to an addition.
- 2. The enrollment projections at all the schools in the cluster reflect a deficit projected to be 708 students based on the latest capacity ratings in the 2020-2021 year. This deficit triggered this study to help provide relief through additions, a new elementary school and/or a combination of the two.
- 3. This study analyzed the four schools (Rosemont, Goshen, Laytonsville and Washington Grove) to figure out the possible sizes and locations for additions on the sites. Costs associated with the additions will be prepared and this information will be presented to the Superintendent for his or her recommendation to address the space shortages as part of the FY 2017-2022 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) in October 2015.
- 4. Sites for a new school and boundary changes were not explored as part of this study.
- 5. Moseley Architects prepared 2 plans for each school in the study and presented them at the community meetings at each school. Feedback was gathered from the meetings and will be presented to all as part of this meeting. Moseley Architects will prepare a final Capacity Study brochure which will include the preferred design along with cost estimates for each proposed addition and feedback received at all meetings.
- 6. The Superintendent will review all the information from the capacity studies and cost estimates before making a recommendation to either build additions at some or all schools or to build a new elementary school or a combination of both. This recommendation will include a request for funding to design and construct whatever is recommended.
- 7. Once the recommendation has been made, if it is for a new elementary school a site selection advisory committee would be formed to evaluate site options. If the solution is to build additions then it is likely that some school boundaries will change once the new capacity has been built. The

boundary changes would be timed to occur when the additional capacity becomes available. In the meantime, schools will be provided with relocatable classrooms as needed.

- 8. Ms. Morris handed over to Ms. Merlo to present all the schemes for the schools in this study.
- 9. Goshen Elementary School: The current core capacity of the school is 740, program capacity is 533, projected program capacity with the addition is 740, current enrollment is 578 and the projected enrollment for the 2015/2016 school year is 602. The school is currently over capacity and has 5 relocatables. The program for the addition is for 10 classrooms and support spaces.

The first scheme locates a two story classroom addition where the relocatables currently are located on the black top and connects to the hallways at the end of this side of the building to create a circulation loop. The addition, being two stories with two new stairs, repurposes the existing stairs as program space. Included are support spaces and separate toilet facilities for students and staff. A one story Kindergarten addition is located by the existing Kindergarten rooms and requires the demolition and replacement of one existing room to be located in the new construction for a total of four new spaces which includes one PreK classroom.

The pros for this scheme are: It has a compact footprint. It creates a looped circulation path on both first and second floors. It provides good access and connections to existing two story building. Some existing portables may be able to stay during construction. The new K and Pre-K rooms are adjacent to existing Kindergarten classrooms. It provides natural daylight to most classrooms. The addition is away from fields.

The cons for the scheme are: It requires relocation of play areas. Current relocatables will have to be moved before construction.

The Alternate Scheme locates a 2 story addition at the north corner of the existing building. This addition is located to allow the blacktop play areas to be retained and not relocated. This plan is a single loaded corridor with support spaces on the North West side and classrooms towards the field side. This scheme only requires one additional stair. The Kindergarten addition is the same as that in the first scheme.

The pros for this scheme are: Fewer disturbances to play areas. The current relocatable classrooms do not need to move during construction. It connects to existing two story for ADA access and requires only one stair. It preserves natural daylight to existing classrooms. The Kindergarten and Pre-K are adjacent to existing K classrooms.

The cons for this scheme are: The small courtyard allows windows only to the classroom side of the existing building. Circulation does not create a loop. Small u shaped courtyard. Remote location for classrooms and access from the school.

Based on discussions and feedback received at the Goshen meeting, Scheme 1 (blue scheme) was identified as the preferred scheme.

10. Laytonsville Elementary School: The current core capacity of the school is 640, program capacity is 448, projected program capacity with the addition is 640, current enrollment is 433 and the projected enrollment for the 2015/2016 school year is 416. The school is currently below capacity and has 1 relocatable on site. The program for the addition is for 5 classrooms 2 special Ed School Community Based (SCB) classrooms, a dual purpose classroom, an Instrumental music classroom and support

spaces. An alternate design which expands the Multipurpose room by approximately 1300 SF and therefore expands the core capacity of the building to 740 was also considered.

The first scheme for a 640 core locates a two story classroom addition at the rear of the building on the black top and connects to the existing hallway by reconfiguration of an existing classroom that would need to be relocated to the new addition. Included are support spaces and separate toilet facilities for students and staff. It was noted that the existing classroom that would be reconfigured is the current Music Room and that would be relocated in the addition and adjacencies to the Instrumental Music Room and the Dual Purpose Room would need to be considered in the final design. It was also noted that it may be more desirable to locate the two SCB classrooms and shared Grooming Room closer to the main entry and administration suite. It is typical to consider new program space only in new additions and not to reconfigure the existing building. However, it is recognized that there are circumstances which may warrant repurposing existing spaces in the building and relocating some existing spaces in the addition. It was noted that if this project goes forward to design that the planners would work with the school to review the merits of such.

The pros for this scheme are: It has a compact two story footprint. It is centrally located and has good access to the existing building. The existing portable will be able to stay during construction. It provides natural daylight to all new and existing classrooms. The addition is away from fields and stays away from existing septic field.

The cons for the scheme are: It requires relocation of play areas and will create two areas that will require supervision. SCB classrooms are far away from the main entry. Circulation does not loop. It requires two stairs and an elevator for a relatively small amount of the overall school.

The Alternate Scheme expands the existing Multi-purpose Room and would reconfigure the new addition to include two more classrooms on each floor for a total of four more classrooms.

The pros for this scheme are the same as above with the ability to increase the core and program capacity to 740.

The cons for this scheme are: Much more disturbance to play areas.

Both schemes are desirable to proceed with. Selection shall be based on the desired core capacity.

11. Rosemont Elementary School: The current core capacity of the school is 640, program capacity is 590, projected program capacity with the addition is 640, current enrollment is 564 and the projected enrollment for the 2015/2016 school year is 634. The school is currently above capacity and has 2 relocatables on site. The program for the addition is for 2 classrooms, a dual purpose classroom, an Instrumental music classroom and support spaces.

Scheme 1 locates a 2 story addition in the existing courtyard. Connections to the existing building are at two existing hallways and preclude the need for repurposing any existing rooms. Support spaces provided in addition to program required spaces are a mechanical room, an electrical room, boys and girls toilets, staff toilets and a data closet. The courtyard created by the addition is wide enough to allow the use of glazing on the addition as well as maintain all glazing on that side of the existing building.

The pros for this scheme are: It has a compact footprint. It is centrally located and so provides better access and circulation to the existing building. Current relocatable

classrooms do not need to move during construction. Instrumental Music and Dual purpose classrooms are closer to Art and Music. It attaches to the current 2 story portion of the existing building. The new access to the fields would help fix the erosion problem on the hill adjacent to the play areas.

The cons for this scheme are: Play areas will have to be relocated. This scheme does not provide the opportunity for the additional parking related to scheme 1 but it could be considered. The current courtyard is reduced to 2 smaller courtyards.

Scheme 2 places the addition at the location where the relocatables currently are and connects to the hallway at the end of this side of the building. Parking is located underneath the addition to take advantage of the slope. A new curb cut will have to be introduced on S. Westland Drive for a drive aisle to the covered parking. The parking will have the required turnaround for vehicles and at the same time be a fix for the current erosion problem on the slope between the school and the fields. (If chosen this option would require further study to assess the feasibility of the parking below the building) An accessible walkway from the addition to the fields is provided in this scheme. The plans allow for support spaces in addition to program spaces including; boys and girls toilet rooms, staff toilets, a mechanical room, electric room and space for data.

The pros for this scheme are: It has a compact footprint. It takes advantage of the slope on site for a lower story at-grade parking which helps relieve the limited parking issue on site. It mostly preserves the play area. It also provides a good opportunity to fix the erosion problem between the upper play areas and the lower fields.

The cons for the scheme are: The location of the addition does not create a loop in circulation through the building. Students in the addition will have to travel relatively longer distances to get to the other end of the building i.e. to get to spaces such as the gym and the multi-purpose room. The lower level parking is isolated from the rest of the building. The current relocatable classrooms will have to move for the construction of this addition.

Based on discussions and feedback received at the Rosemont meeting and afterwards with MCPS, Scheme 1 (green scheme) was identified as the preferred scheme.

12. Washington Grove Elementary School: The current core capacity of the school is 740, program capacity is 603, projected program capacity with the addition is 740, current enrollment is 408 and the projected enrollment for the 2015/2016 school year is 447. The school is currently under capacity and has no relocatables. The program for the addition calls for 6 classrooms and support spaces.

The first scheme locates a two story classroom addition on the SE side of the existing building adjacent to the two story portion and the field. This addition would require a jog in the existing fire road/paved play area and could be relocated as shown in the presentation. The existing soft play would have to be relocated. There are three classrooms on each floor of the addition with connections to the existing first and second story through the existing stair locations as shown on the slides. (The existing stairs would be demolished and turned into connecting corridors.)

The pros for this scheme are, it has a compact footprint, central location and good access to the existing building. It creates a looped circulation path on both stories. No new elevator is required. No loss of program space in the existing building. It maintains natural light to all existing

classrooms. There is minimal impact on the field. It connects to the existing building at stairwells and does not require alteration to program space in the existing building.

The cons are; it requires relocation of soft play areas. It requires reconfiguration of fire access road. It impacts the size of the field.

The Alternate Scheme depicts a 2 story addition in the front of the building and wrapping around the existing gymnasium. This scheme does not require reconfiguration of the play areas or the fire road. There are three classrooms on the first floor including one relocated from the existing building where the new connecting corridor attaches to the main hallway. The second floor is shown with four classrooms but no toilet rooms. This scheme would require two stairs for egress out of the second floor and an elevator for ADA access.

The pros are: There is no loss of play area. It is a compact 2 story building. The addition is away from the fields and playgrounds. The addition does not require revisions to the fire access road. The addition maintains natural light to all classrooms. The jogs in the corridors are potential break-out areas.

The cons are: It does not connect to the existing 2 story portion of the building. It requires 2 stairways and an elevator. The classrooms in the addition are remote and isolated from the rest of the school. Circulation does not loop. The corridor is extra wide with jogs in it due to existing building constraints. Room E113 loses one window. It requires the repurposing of one existing classroom which is replaced in the addition.

Based on discussions and feedback received at the Washington Grove meeting, Scheme 1 (blue scheme) was identified as the preferred scheme.

13. Ms. Merlo handed over to Ms. Morris to give an overview of the 3 other schools in the cluster, not included in this study.

Gaithersburg Elementary School's current core capacity is 740, the current program capacity is 771, current enrollment is 812, the projected enrollment for the 2015-2016 school year is 871. It currently has 7 relocatables on site. Gaithersburg ES has maximized the building area on their site and are at the maximum core capacity of 740 already. Therefore no new additions are planned at this site.

The one-story rear half of the building is less than 15 years old and therefore it would not be approved by the state as a candidate for demolition and reconstruction and no state construction funding would be possible for a new building. Any proposed new building/addition at the site would make the school larger than the desired 740 core. The deficit of seats at Gaithersburg ES will be addressed as part of this study through space being created at other schools. No boundary changes are part of this study but would be a separate discussion/decision on how to address the population and boundary for Gaithersburg ES.

Strawberry Knoll's current core capacity is 640, the current program capacity is 427, current enrollment is 595, the projected enrollment for the 2015-2016 school year is 633. It currently has 6 relocatables on site. A 9 classroom addition was studied for this building in 2013.

Scheme 1 locates an addition at the western end of the school.

The pros are; it's a one story addition and will therefore not require stairs or an elevator. The kindergarten classrooms are near the front of the school. Circulation is improved. The con is the addition has a large footprint.

Scheme 2 locates an addition at the back of the school.

The pros are; it's a one story addition and will therefore not require stairs or an elevator. It can be built without disrupting the existing building.

The cons are; it has a large footprint. The Kindergarten classrooms are at the back of the building. The addition encroaches on the existing playfields.

Summit Hall's current core capacity is 640, the current program capacity is 413, current enrollment is 628, the projected enrollment for the 2015-2016 school year is 669. It currently has 10 relocatables on site. An 8 classroom addition was studied for this building in 2013. This addition brings the school up to a 640 program capacity. A Rev/Ex project scheduled for a 2022 completion date is also in the pipeline for this facility. This project will raise the core capacity of the school to 740. The addition that was studied in 2013 has been master planned into the rev/ex slated for completion in 2022.

Scheme 1 locates a linear single loaded corridor 2 story addition at the back of the school and master planned into the rev/ex.

The pros are; It allows space to reconfigure and adds additional parking in future. Existing corridors are aligned. Kindergarten and Pre-k rooms are clustered and circulation through the building is simple.

The cons are; the single main hallway will be congested. Existing relocatable classrooms will need to be moved during construction. The Judy center will need to be relocated. The building has a large footprint (inefficient) initially. The existing gym will remain and will be far from the play fields.

Scheme 2 locates an addition on the side of the existing building and this is master planned into the rev/ex.

The pro's are; It is a smaller building footprint. Existing relocatables classrooms and judy center do not have to move. It has an efficiency of 68%.

The cons are; the kindergarten is far from the entrance, The building will have a large footprint after the rev/ex (will be inefficient) The addition does not lend itself well to reconfiguration of the existing to remain portion of the building during the rev/ex. The media center will be windowless after the rev/ex. The gymnasium will be far from the playfields after the rev/ex. It will be difficult to lock off portions of the building for afterhours use after the rev/ex. This scheme reduces the available number and size of the playfields. A full size soccer field will no longer fit on site.

Scheme 3 locates a compact addition above the middle portion of the existing building.

The pro's are; It is a smaller building footprint. Kindergarten and Pre-K rooms are clustered. There is more open space for play areas. The Judy center does not have to move.

The cons are; A large area of existing space will need to be renovated to support the second floor. The Kindergarten classrooms are not near the front of the building. It will be extremely difficult to construct the addition while the building is occupied. The gym is not

Page 8 04.28.2015

near the playfields. The media center will be windowless. This option is the most expensive. It has a very low building efficiency of 40%.

- 14. Based on current projections over the next five years there is a 708 seat deficit in the cluster, the revised projections are based on a ratio of 23:1 for upper grades and 18:1 for the lower grades. If all six additions are built the capacity would add up to approximately 1070 capacity for the cluster. A new school would have a capacity of 740.
- 15. At previous meetings feedback received from participants included the following comments for further consideration:

The RevEx work proposed at Summit Hall ES should be completed as soon as possible to relieve the issue of major overcrowding at this school.

Gaithersburg ES is over capacity and has a large population of walkers enrolled in the school. The preference expressed by the participants was to keep the students as close to the base school as possible. There was concern about public transportation access to other schools in the cluster and long bus rides if some of these students are relocated through a boundary change.

The MCPS process for Rev/Ex and capacity deficit project funding and the maximum size recommendations for elementary schools were questioned. It was requested that the maximum size for an elementary school of 740 capacity be re-evaluated if possible to keep students closer to their base school.

Multiple schools expressed parking and traffic flow concerns with any addition and student capacity increase associated with the proposed additions.

There was concern expressed by participants that looking for and acquiring a new school site or evaluating the existing sites would further delay the relief of overcrowding.

- 16. The next steps following this community meeting will be, the architects' submission of the capacity study report including the cost estimates for each preferred scheme to MCPS. This in addition to feedback received from the various communities will be sent to the superintendant for review. The superintendent will make a recommendation on classroom additions, a new elementary school, or a combination of both. The superintendent's recommendation will include a request for funds to design and construct whatever is recommended. If the superintendent recommends a new elementary school be opened, then a site selection advisory committee would be formed to evaluate site options. Whether the solution to space shortages are classroom additions or a new school, it is likely that some school boundaries will change once the new capacity is built. Boundary changes would be timed to occur when the additional capacity becomes available. In the meantime, capacity will be handled with relocatable classrooms as needed. In November 2015, the Board of Education will hold a work session, followed by public hearings. In January 2016 the County Executive will publish his recommendations. In May 2016 the County Council will make a decision on the final budget
- 17. The following is a link to MCPS's website where all presentations and meeting minutes related to this capacity study can be found.

http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/construction/studies/gccstudy.shtm

More information related to this study will be posted here as they become available.

18. Questions after the presentation included the following:

Why is an addition being considered at Washington Grove if the school is currently under capacity and not projected to be overcapacity in the future?

Washington Grove is being looked at for relief of cluster wide overcrowding which would necessitate a boundary change if selected.

How will gym classes and lunches be organized with these additions?

These additions are bringing the school's program capacities to match their core capacities. The additions will not exceed the existing core capacities if expansion of the core capacities is not possible.

An urgent and immediate solution is needed for the overcrowding at Gaithersburg E.S. What strategies are being employed for relief at this time? (Gaithersburg ES is projected to grow by 80 students per year for the next three years.)

Ms. Morris stated that this question and comment will be noted but does not have an answer at this time aside from the use of relocatable classrooms.

Participants reiterated that putting additions on schools such as Laytonsville is not the solution to overcrowding at Gaithersburg ES. This is because it is too far a bus ride for the kids and also a long drive for parents who have to drop off and pick up kids from school. It will affect bell times plus boundary changes affect after school activities and the families sense of connection to their community and neighbors that live close by. Currently there are only 60 students that ride the bus the rest of the school population are walkers.

Ms. Morris acknowledged this as a valid concern to be raised. Transportation is a factor that needs to be considered.

Will review of the clusters and possible changes to the boundaries of clusters be considered? The cluster has a unique shape which affects the population at its schools.

Ms Morris stated that a cross cluster boundary approach is not the first solution because of where the population feeds to the High School but it could be considered if an appropriate solution is not found within the cluster.

Why is Gaithersburg ES not being expanded? Participants reiterated that Gaithersburg ES has a large walker population and is an urban school with many kids coming from families in shared housing which is not accurately reflected in the projections. The PTA would prefer to have a larger school, beyond 740, with multiple stories to keep the population at their base school and maximize the benefit to walker families by not creating an additional hardship for families that don't have a car and busing their children to a location further away. The population of walkers is so high, boundary changes will do very little for the relief that is urgently needed.

The BOE has established two sizes for the core capacity of elementary schools in Montgomery County, they are either a 640 student core or 740 student core. These numbers are the optimal size for capacity along with the size of the multipurpose room being able to adequately accommodate the lunch shifts at reasonable times. Gaithersburg ES has maximized the building

area on their site and are at the maximum core capacity of 740 already. Therefore no new additions are planned at this site. The one-story rear half of the building is less than 15 years old and will not be approved by the state as a candidate for demolition and reconstruction. Therefore no state construction funding would be possible for a new building and it would be larger than the desired 740 core. Boundary changes are not part of this study but would be a separate discussion about how to address the population and boundary for Gaithersburg ES.

A participant stated that this study did not explore enough to help relieve the overcrowding at Gaithersburg ES. The main problem for the overcrowding at Gaithersburg ES is the population density near the school. It should have explored the possibility of using the whole Gaithersburg ES site & the adjacent Middle school site to help solve this problem.

Ms. Morris stated that she will take this idea back to MCPS division of Planning and Construction to see if there is any possibility of this as an alternative scenario should the maximum core size be expanded from 740.

How will additions be sequenced if that ends up being the recommended solution? Will the county build all the additions at the same time?

Ms. Morris stated that it could be staggered or done at the same time but the timing will have to work with the construction budget and funds available. A good example of concurrent construction is the Downcounty capacity study where the additions are currently all moving ahead at the same time.

A participant stated that they strongly believe that the additions at other schools to take care of Gaithersburg ES overcrowding is not a viable idea and that a new school needs to be built in addition to the mentioned additions to take care of the deficit in the cluster.

Ms. Morris acknowledged this concern.

Participants asked that their feedback and concerns be added to the report to be submitted to the superintendant to help in arriving at the right decisions.

All comments are included in the meeting notes.

A participant added that two viable solutions to the overcrowding in the cluster which are: tear down Gaithersburg ES and rebuild and to build an additional new school in the area. These are not under consideration as part of this study and should be included for the superintendent to make his or her recommendation.

Ms. Morris explained that Gaithersburg ES is not a candidate for a RevEx anytime soon.

Participants stated that they would like all MCPS decisions for building be made based upon need.

Ms. Morris acknowledged this concern.

Participants asked if developers are required to provide land for schools when they build.

School sites are indentified and required to be provided by the developer in some of the largest housing developments, such as in the White Flint Sector Plan.

A participant expressed concern about the overcrowding at Summit Hall and how it's effecting the morale of the teachers in the building. The principal and a lot of teachers are planning on retiring because of this overcrowding issue. This is a serious and urgent issue and needs to be resolved. Also the overcrowding has gotten to a point where their computer lab has been moved to mobile carts and the room converted to a classroom rather than a lab rather than providing another needed relocatable classroom as requested by the school, which they find unacceptable.

MCPS has many very high morale schools that are overcapacity. Ms. Morris stated that computer labs are being taken out of all new schools as well and replaced with mobile laptop carts because all buildings have wifi now and so there is no need for a space dedicated as a computer lab. One has access to technology at any location in the building.

Summit Hall currently has a windowless media center so it will not be a new issue. Why is it listed as a con in the slides presented?

The referenced con is for the new media center in the study (option 3). All new media centers are required to have windows per MCPS's standards. That is why it is listed as a con.

One participant asked if there are any new School-Based Health Centers proposed for the cluster.

Ms. Morris stated that there are no new Health Centers proposed at this time, and those are funded by the Health and Human Services branch of the government.

It was stated that the Crown and Shady Grove sector development will significantly effect the projections at Washington Grove and Rosemont. It was believed that the numbers for the seat deficits will only increase each year due to these developments.

Ms. Morris reiterated that MCPS will monitor the enrollment growth and has the ability to add addition projects in the future to address enrollment growth that is longer on the horizon beyond six years.

A participant stated that they were bothered that the study isn't suggesting a recommendation to the new Superintendent but rather more fact gathering which doesn't communicate the emotional content expressed by participants and the deep convictions of the communities represented.

Ms. Morris hoped that the community would trust MCPS to fully communicate the depth of emotions and concerns regarding this decision to the new Superintendent so that he or she can make an informed decision. She stated that there will be verbal conversations about the study accompanying the report that will convey the emotional content expressed during the studies.

A participant asked why can't Summit Hall be on the RevEx schedule sooner?

Ms. Morris stated that MCPS has two different tracks for projects and funding, one addresses funding for Revitalizations/Expansions(RevEx) and the other funds addition projects to relieve capacity deficits. The RevEx projects and funding are tied to the age and condition of the facilities as evaluated and ranked in 1999 and 2012. All schools were ranked based on educational parameters and physical infrastructure needs, then placed in rank order for the projects to be funded. This list is not influenced by capacity needs or condition changes and projects are not moved up or down on this list. No project can jump over another project on this list. The second capital improvement category for the facilities is for classroom additions based

on capacity needs. Schools are evaluated based on need. Projects consist of additions studied at elementary schools where the facility has a deficit of at least 92 students over capacity. (Which would translate to a 4 classroom addition minimum). These needs are re-evaluated each year and priority given to the schools with greatest need and where it makes the most sense to use the available funding. Right now Summit Hall ES has a RevEx project slated to be completed in 2022 (it was 2017 but all RevEx projects were delayed due to funding).

A participant asked whether underground parking was proposed for Rosemont ES.

No underground parking is proposed, there was one option that had open parking partially below the building addition but that scheme was not the chosen scheme to move forward.

Ms. Morris thanked the participants for coming out and reiterated where information from the meetings related to this study can be found. The meeting was adjourned.

The above information is the writer's recollection of the discussions and decisions at the meeting. Should there be any additions or corrections, please notify the writer within two weeks of distribution for correction.

NOTES BY:

REVIEWED BY:

Olivia Brookman Associate Bill Brown Vice President

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