

**Watertown Board of Education
Regular Board of Education Meeting**

Meeting Date: April 27, 2020
Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m.
Meeting Place: REMOTE MEETING

Members Present: Ms. Leslie Crotty, Chairman
Mr. Tom Lambert, Vice Chairman
Ms. Janelle Wilk, Secretary
Mr. Robert Makowski
Ms. Cathie Rinaldi
Ms. Diane Bristol
Ms. Cindy Eastman
Ms. Josephine Cavallo-Rosa
Mr. Jason Malagutti

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Rydell Harrison –Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Tom DiStasio – Business Manager

- A. Convene Regular Meeting – 7:30 p.m.**
- B. Salute to the Flag**
- C. Moment of Silence - In remembrance of Ray Ceniccola**

Dr. Harrison - Remo Ceniccola passed away peacefully on Sunday, April 5, 2020 at his home in Oakville. He was the loving husband of 43 years to Lulu Ceniccola. Ray was born in Waterbury in 1955 and has been closely connected to our school community as a parent, employee and grandparent for many years.

Ray began working in Watertown in 2007. His love for our district and our community was evident in the way he approached his work as our Facilities Manager. Over the last two years, I've worked closely with Ray, and have appreciated his willingness to share keen insights, attention to detail and determination to find solutions that prioritized the best interests of students, staff and the community as a whole.

Besides his wife Lulu of Oakville and his parents, Ray leaves behind to cherish his memory his two daughters, Stephanie Pellegrini and her husband Peter of Oakville, and Natalie Rinaldi and her husband Bobby of Watertown. He also left behind his true heart and soul, his four beloved grandchildren, Vincent, Arianna, John, and Giada. He also leaves behind his siblings, Marrico Ceniccola of Oakville, Linda Kulman of Waterbury.

For many years Remo worked as a systems engineer for Sammons/Telemedia Cable and was working as the Facility Manager for the Watertown Board of Education as well as the owner of the Wine Rack in Oakville for 12 years. His family knew him as a work-a-holic but he could be found in his free time keeping up on the latest news, playing with his latest gadget that was usually something Apple related, or in the garage working with wood and shining up his cars. He enjoyed relaxing on the couch with his grandkids finding the latest movie to watch with them. Ray was so proud of his grandchildren who are all students at John Trumbull and even shared pictures of their distance learning classrooms with administrators in a meeting the week that he passed away.

Due to COVID-19, all services for Ray were held privately and at the convenience of the family. A Mass of Christian Burial will take place in the future and be announced at a later date. Our hearts go out to the entire Ceniccola family during their time of grief.

Ms. Crotty - Thank you Dr. Harrison. On behalf of the Board of Education, I would like to offer a moment of silence in remembrance of Ray Ceniccola.

D. Roll Call – Ms. Crotty

E. Minutes

Agenda Item:	E.1
Subject:	Minutes of the March 9, 2020 Regular Board of Education Meeting
Motion Presented By:	Ms. Wilk
Motion Seconded By:	Mr. Lambert
Text of the Motion:	Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of the minutes from the March 9 th , 2020 Board of Education's regular meeting as presented.
Discussion:	None
Opposed:	None

Watertown Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes

Abstained: None
 Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: E.2
 Subject: Minutes of the March 23, 2020 Emergency Board of Education Meeting

Motion Presented By: Ms. Wilk
 Motion Seconded By: Mr. Lambert

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of the minutes from the March 23rd, 2020 Board of Education's emergency meeting as presented.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Vote: Motion passed

F. Superintendent's Recommendations and Report

1. Appointments – (Information Only)

None

2. Transfers – (Information Only)

None

3. Resignations – (Information Only)

Mr. Christopher Brown from the position of Director of Student Services for Watertown Public Schools, effective June 14, 2020, for the purpose of accepting a position in another school district.

4. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Harrison – Thank you. Good evening again everyone. You'll see that on your agenda there is one resignation for your information. Mr. Christopher Brown for the position of Director of Student Services, effective July 14th. He will be taking a new position as the Director of Pupil services in Milford Public Schools. We are very sad to see him go. He has been with our district since 2017 and has played an instrumental role for many with students with IEP's and also our SPED staff and our student services staff as well. That position was posted today along with the position of Facilities Manager. Both of those positions are going to be posted

internally for five days and the interview process for both positions will be held virtually. I do want to note that as we are looking at next steps related to interviewing for the student services position, we will be putting together a panel to sit on that interview committee. We are also considering having a parent be a part of that committee as well as we go through the future and I will keep the Board updated on that process.

There are three items that I wanted to talk about today. The first is related to our transportation contract with First Student. The Executive Order number 7r requires that the school district employees be retained or restored to employment to the greatest extent practicable. In addition, and perhaps more challenging, this order provides that when Boards of Education determine that a contract with the transportation provider requires amendment to more accurately reflect the actual costs incurred during the duration of this public health event, the board shall promptly negotiate amendment of the contract, so that they maintain employees on the payroll and provide them with health insurance. What would maintain the fleet for transportation contractors? We have been working with one of the attorneys from Shipman and Goodwin, who is negotiating on our behalf with First Student. First Student prepared a detailed spread sheet of the monthly costs required to ensure the continuity of services as notified, as spelled out in the Executive Order. This will serve as the foundation for the negotiation discussions as we go forward. And although we have not completed the negotiations, we are anticipating realizing some savings from during this period that will be very instrumental as we are planning for next year's budget and working in conjunction with the Town.

The second area that I wanted to provide an update on is graduation and end of the year activities. As you know, we are currently scheduled to be out of school until May 15th although all indications point to the fact that we will likely be out for further than May 15th. I have been working with the high school and the middle school administration on contingency plans for our end of the year events, if school does remain closed for the rest of the year. During a recent call with the Commissioner, the Superintendents were encouraged to begin discussions about graduation and more importantly to gather input from students. To date, Dr. Parlato has received input from senior class advisors, student council advisors, as well as her leadership team. We also received input from senior class officers and seniors in the student council. Classroom teachers also held three Google meets, similar to this one, to gather ideas from seniors. Our plan is to have a virtual or alternative graduation that will allow students to safely gather with their families and give us an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments. We have looked at several examples of these types of graduations and our planning for ours to have some in person component for students to make this even more personalized. We do have alternative dates for the prom and senior picnic after the end of the school year, but they will be based on what the social distancing mandates are at that particular time. We will be sharing more information with our families after we have more concrete information regarding the length of the school closing. I did just want to let board members and also our community members know that those plans are in the works and I think that there is really creative ideas and opportunities, not just for us to celebrate them as a school community, but really as an entire Watertown/Oakville community as well.

The last I wanted to provide an update on distance learning. This weekend, I sent an email to our families about our next phase for distance learning. Supplemental learning, as you recall, began on March 13th with teachers and related service providers sharing a bank of resources and tasks to combat the loss of instructional time to maintain the continuity of education.

Initially, we expected only to be out for two weeks and we were following the states recommendation to focus on supplemental learning and that supplemental learning was optional. After surveying families on their technology needs, we distributed, initially, 420 chrome books. Then we launched Phase 1 of distance learning. After the closing was extended and the Connecticut State Department of Education recommended that districts shift to distance learning, we provided teachers with professional learning and Phase 1 of distance learning began on March 30th. In preparation for launching distance learning, we distributed an additional 430 chrome books. Our distance learning framework was focused on content delivery and connection, helping teachers to use digital tools to make their content available for students and helping them to connect with their students. We decided to use an asynchronous learning environment where students would engage with class materials and complete assignments at their own pace versus live time instruction unlike this meeting that we are in now. At that time, we notified parents that there would be limited synchronous or live instruction given the variability of internet access with our student's bandwidth and also our student availability and concerns regarding State and Federal privacy guidelines. In a recent survey, districts across the state were asked about which model they were using for distance learning. The three choices were primarily asynchronous, where things are happening not in live time, or primarily synchronous, where everything was happening live or mostly live or a mix or hybrid of the two. Across the state, 30% of the districts, including Watertown, were asynchronous and only about 3% were primarily synchronous, where it was live. The other 67% of districts were using a hybrid approach. When asked about plans for the next phase of distance learning, in that same survey, 75% of districts that reported were planning for hybrid, including Watertown. 5% were planning total synchronous, where it is mostly live and then about 20% were planning to continue with primarily asynchronous learning. So, Watertown was included in the 75% using a hybrid approach as we moved into Phase 2. Although many of our teachers have already explored using some of the synchronous tools for interacting with students, all teachers will be expected to provide live learning opportunities as we go forward. Examples of the live learning opportunities include teaching a live mini lesson for the entire class that would of course be recorded for students who may not be able to join in real time, or small group instruction for Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention groups, question and answer sessions that are live for students during live teacher office hours, or telehealth services led by school social workers, psychologists, speech teachers, occupational therapists, and physical therapists. And naturally those telehealth services will primarily be individual.

During Phase 2, teachers will also provide direct instruction for new concepts by using teacher created audio and video recordings. These teachers created resources may be used in conjunction many of the 3rd party resources that are already being used. What will add some clarity for students and our goal is to increase student engagement. So, for instance, many of our teachers might have found a great instructional video on Khan Academy that would set up a lesson. So instead of just using that, providing some context with their voice being a part of a video or a part of an audio recording that would help to shape that lesson. Throughout this week, teachers will be provided with professional learning tools that will assist them throughout this phase. Most importantly, teachers will have the opportunity to see examples of how their colleagues across the district are using the digital tools to engage students. Phase 2 will be rolled in during the week of May 4th. Our initial focus will be on pulling small groups with students who are experiencing the most difficulty and again with

the Telehealth services and then providing students with the created audio and video recording that help with connecting the daily learning tasks and assignments to the bigger picture around what they are learning. While we are still growing and I am very determined that we will continue to make improvements to our distance learning framework, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our teachers who have had to completely change the way they do their work and the way they are thinking about their work. Teaching and learning are fundamentally built upon human interactions and to alter that part of our profession has required teachers to really readjust the way that they think about teaching and learning in the classroom. We will be building on some of the strengths that we have seen across the district and learning from many of those lessons. So, I will keep you posted on what that rollout looks like as we go forward.

Ms. Crotty - Dr. Harrison, I just wanted to respond to the resignation of Mr. Brown. I don't know, given the circumstances of school closure, whether or not we will have the opportunity to shake his hand and in person share our appreciation for what he has done since he came to Watertown Public Schools including stepping in when you as a superintendent were out of the district for a day. Chris has been really a great addition to the cabinet and to Watertown Public Schools and I am disappointed and sad to see him go but happy for any opportunity that works out better for him and his family. I just wanted to say publicly that we will miss you and we thank you for everything that you we know that you will continue to do up until your last day on June 14th with us. I want to thank you also Dr. Harrison. Dr. Harrison and I had a lengthy conversation today in regards to distance learning. We do that quite often. It's not always a short conversation and I appreciate his taking the time. I believe that there have been some really strong guidelines and mandates that are coming forward that will give us a stricter timeline into where the expectations are for both the level of work to Mr. Makowski's question and to Tom's question on learning in person through video calls and content with the teachers not just in Special Ed but across the board. I am really excited that we are moving forward with our distance learning and always looking to improve and do better offer more development to our staffs so thank you for that.

G. Discussion Regarding the Superintendent's Grading Proposal

Dr. Harrison - Just a little bit of background. The Connecticut State Department of Education is supporting the national growing consensus that given the differences across districts and across states around online learning models and the issues of access and equity, that it's appropriate for us to look at the second half of this school year with a special lens when it comes to grading, GPA's, and transcripts. And based on the recommendations sent to us Superintendent's earlier this month, that each local district adopt a pass/fail protocol. The belief is that these uniform grading policies across the state will help with a consisting grading scheme for evaluating all Connecticut students by post-secondary institutions within and also outside of Connecticut. So, I will focus on our grading proposal, this grading proposal, in relationship to high school. An

amendment to the program of studies that was approved by the board last year and share a little bit of information about the plan going forward that aligns our grading practices at the middle school as well. When schools on March 12th, we had about 3 weeks left in the third quarter at the high school. We, of course, had students who had assignments or tests or assessments that they had to make up and when we closed, we didn't anticipate when kids left that day, we didn't know that they would need all of their materials. So, it has been difficult for some of students to make up some of those assignments. We wanted to make sure that students had an opportunity to make up work and also had the opportunity to turn in more assignments. So, rather than transitioning to a fourth quarter, we decided to extend the third quarter for the remainder of the school year. For quarter three grading, our teachers are continuing to enter grades into PowerSchool as they have been. Quarter three assigning of work will end on June 10th and June 11th- 17th will serve as an opportunity for make ups and for teachers to do some final grading. At the end of the third quarter, teachers will have one of three options that they will enter into PowerSchool from a drop-down box. That will be a pass+, a pass, or a fail. They will also have the opportunity, if a student still has work, they have to turn in and there is an agreement there, that they will be able to turn into an incomplete or I. For quarter three, the way that we are determining what equals pass+, that is the final grade of 89-100, pass will be 65 – 88, and a fail will be 0 -64. The quarter three report card will have the letter grades on it. Those grades will then be converted into their numeric equivalent when it comes time to calculate the final grades. A pass+ will be entered into the final equation as a 95, a pass as an 85 and an F as a 64. Incompletes will be used just as we do during the school year that allows students to make up their work or complete the assignments. GPAs will be frozen, as we go forward, based on the last day of semester one. Meaning that these quarter three grades will not factor into student's overall GPAs. Quarter three honor roll will still be calculated using the same numeric equivalent grades. Our transcripts for students when they are sent to colleges or the Military or for work, they only carry one final course grade, and I included in our proposal that the way we will calculate that final grade that you will see on a transcript. So, for full year courses, quarter one will be 25% of the grade, quarter two also 25% and then the midterm will be 10% of the grade. Quarter three will then be 40% of the final grade and students will not take final exams. Going forward with semester long courses, quarter three will be the final grade and again, there will be no final exam. Some of the things that we will do going forward, once our proposal is approved, is send home to all of our families, and FAQ document that lays out all of how grades are calculated and the grading plan for this part of the year. Once we move beyond this year, we will go back to the grading that was approved earlier in the school year with the course of studies. Just as a note, Swift Middle School will also adopt a pass/fail and a pass+ protocol as explained above. For them, the first two trimesters will be weighted at 45% each of the final grade and the last trimester will be 10% of the final grade. For our elementary school students, teachers will continue to monitor our student's mastery of standards, as they already receive standard based report cards instead of letter or numeric grades, and they will use student work examples, online assessments that students are working on to determine their

levels and at the end of the year, student's will receive progress reports to show progression on their standards.

H. 20/21 Board of Education Budget

Ms. Crotty – We put a placement in here for discussion for the 20/21 budget, however, we haven't had the presentation to the Town Council yet so we will wait for our Finance Chair, Diane Bristol, to give her report later in the committee report in the meeting.

I. Wall of Honor

The Watertown Board of Education is currently seeking nominations for the Watertown High School Wall of Honor. The purpose of the Wall of Honor is to recognize those individuals that have brought distinction to Watertown High School and the community through their commitment to excellence. To be nominated to the Wall of Honor, a candidate must have graduated from Watertown High School at least 10 years prior to the year of induction and have consistently demonstrated the highest standards of excellence and honor in his or her chosen vocation. Award recipients will be chosen from the fields of: Athletics; Business/Finance; Fine/Performing Arts; Education; Health/Medical Services; Government/Public Service; and Science/Technology. Nomination Forms can be found on the district's website at www.watertownps.org. The completed nomination forms must be received in the district office no later than May 27, 2020.

J. Items of Discussion

A) 2020-2021 Non-Resident Tuition Rates

Ms. Crotty – As we do every budget season, the tuition rates are set and Dr. Harrison did include them in your packets. You can see the chart for the proposed tuition rates for non-residents for elementary grades K – 5, middle school 6 – 8, and high school 9 – 12 and then the preschool "Just Friends" non special ed families. There is a slight increase in each of them.

Dr. Harrison – I just wanted to note that the tuition increase that you see there are based on the per pupil increase from the most recent audited fiscal year.

B) Non-Renewal of Non-Tenured Teachers

Connecticut State Law requires that non-tenured teachers whose contracts are not being renewed shall be notified in writing prior to May 1, 2020, following the Board's approval. These letters must be sent based on a possible reduction in force before knowing the results of the Town Budget Referendum in order to comply with the state deadline of May 1st. The Board has the authority to rescind the nonrenewal letters at a later date if there is no reduction in force as a result of the budget cut.

Dr. Harrison – I just wanted to note that we have 57 teachers who are non-tenured teachers who received that renewal notification. We typically deliver them in person and meet with the groups of teachers and explain the process; this year the state allowed that we could send it via email. I followed up with an email to the entire district to remind them of this process. I thought that was particularly important for our brand new teachers who had never gone through this before and then they are suddenly in the middle of a health crisis getting a letter saying they were not going to be renewed. I explained the connection to the budget process.

K. Committee Reports:

Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Ms. Cathie Rinaldi, Chair - No Policy and Labor Committee, Ms. Janelle Wilk, Chair – Yes

Negotiations set to begin next week with the Custodial, Paraprofessional, Cafeteria workers and Secretaries unions are postponed due to the pandemic.

Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Diane Bristol, Chair – Yes

On May 4th, Dr. Harrison will be presenting the Board of Education budget proposal to the Town Council via a virtual meeting. On May 26th, the Town Council will be holding a public hearing for the budget and during that time, will allow for public participation. Town Council is still working out how that will happen. It is also on that date that the Town Council will set the 2020-2021 budget.

Just to be clear, the State has allowed, by Executive Order, municipalities to set their budgets for the year without a referendum. It doesn't allow Boards of Education to set their budgets, it only allows them to propose budgets to their fiscal authorities in their towns, in this case, the Town Council. The Town Council does not need to have a referendum on the budget, so it is very important for anyone that has any comments that they want the Board of Education or the Town Council to hear, that they stay tuned to the Town Council's notification on how you can do that, because they won't be making a decision that evening.

Facilities/PBC/Operations Committee, Mr. Thomas Lambert, Chair – Yes

According to the report from John Kwasniewski, from Burlington Construction, he gave an update on the Board of Ed's building interiors. Casework and countertops in the open office area, all offices, and kitchenette have been installed. All interior doors and hardware have been installed. All interior painting has been completed except for the main entry vestibule entry. There will be some miscellaneous touch-up required, and this will be completed as the project progresses. The cloud ceilings in the corridor/ breakout are being constructed and installed this week. All other acoustic ceilings have been installed. Carpet tile has been installed in the open office area, and all offices. These spaces will be receiving the vinyl baseboard by the end of this week. Sheet vinyl and cove base have been installed in the Board of Ed file storage room. Mobile Storage units in the Board of Ed file storage room will be completed today 4/27. All of the final wiring for the IT system has been completed. The server rack and cabinet have been installed.

All bathrooms have been completed. All lighting, lighting controls, power outlets, fire alarm, data cabling, and sound system wiring and device installation is completed. The luxury vinyl tile in the kitchenette will be completed by May 1st. The luxury vinyl tile in the corridor breakout will be completed by May 8th. The walk-off mat in the vestibule will be installed by May 8th. On the exterior, the remaining site concrete; sidewalks, curbs, bollards and light pole bases were finished last week. The site contractor is doing finish grading in preparation for the paving and landscaping.

Regarding John Trumbull, Plymouth Glass have the frames for the glass wall for the interior, they have the doors. They are looking at a two day installation and Tom DiStasio is working with the custodial staff at John Trumbull for getting them into the building. We feel confident that when our schools do open back up, that the security project will be finished at John Trumbull.

Governance and Community Engagement Committee, Mr. Robert Makowski, Chair - No

L. Communications – Secretary

Ms. Wilk – We did receive a card and it says, “BOE members, thank you so much for all of the love and support you have given us during this very difficult time. Thank you for the food from Cavallo’s in Oakville. Everything is so greatly appreciated. Love you all, Josephine.”

M. Report from the Board Chair

Ms. Crotty - Schools play a pivotal role in the public health crisis. Every school district is facing the uncertainty as to how long this closing will last and when schools can reopen. Although there are uncertainties inherent in any timeline for returning to a “normal” school day, it is important that WPS has a clear vision as to what the key considerations are when determining our ability to re-open, and how to prepare for the reopening with a primary focus on health and safety. Once a re-opening decision is made, readiness depends on a variety of elements, including both state and local health department regulations and guidelines. As the Superintendent and staff continues to lead the district in growing our Distance Learning platforms, the Board of Education is building a School Re-Entry Advisory Board to plan for three possible school re-opening contingency plans. Each of the three contingency plans that will include varying degrees of what re-entry could look like, each with their own levels of safeguards to protect our students and staff, with respect to Transportation, Physical Infrastructure, Scheduling and Staffing, Delivery of Instruction, and Health and Behavioral Norms.

For example, Plan A could include re-opening schools with a State regulation that allows for up to 20 students in a classroom at a time: so, what will delivery of instruction look like under this plan, what will Food Services look like, will we need staggered scheduling and staffing for those conditions? Contingency Plan B & C would include progressively stricture guidelines of social distancing. The Re-Entry Board will focus on the commonalities between each contingency plan so that we can immediately begin to prepare for those: such as temperature taking of each person who enters, varying degrees of measuring and controlling physical distancing at each

school, sanitizing scheduling, consideration for students with high risk-family members, what will the safety protocols be if an infection occurs, what PPEs will the district need to supply, desk spacing, and utilization of building space.

Included in this group will be representatives from Administration, Teachers Union, Medical Field, Police Department, Board of Education, and the Superintendent. Other staff members will be brought in as each task dictates. A letter will be sent out to participants this week.

Tonight’s agenda included a way for members of the public to participate through an email address. I would like to share what was received for tonight’s meeting:

Public Participation

Peter Kite – 49 Cutler Knoll, WTN - Over the past few weeks, I have inquired with the Superintendent of Schools, Principals and Board of Education Members as to when Watertown Schools will utilize different technologies to improve upon the education our school system is providing. Over those 3 or 4 weeks, I’ve been told we are discussing many options.

Could you please provide an exact date as to when Watertown Schools will implement a more detailed and structured learning experience, that enables students to have interaction with their teachers via a multitude of technological platforms.

Dr. Harrison – Looking at phase two of distant learning with the focus on more live instruction with small groups and virtual office hours where there is some live student to teacher interaction. Our plan for beginning and launching phase two is on Monday, May 4th with a focus on small group instruction and then going out to all of our schools that week.

N. Action Items – Adoption of Items to be Approved by Consent

Agenda Item:	N.1
Subject:	Consideration of the Approval of Distance Learning Grading Proposal for Watertown School District

Motion Presented By:	Ms. Rinaldi
Motion Seconded By:	Ms. Eastman

Text of the Motion:	Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of the Distance Learning Grading Proposal as presented.
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Discussion:	None
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Opposed:	None
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Abstained:	None
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Watertown Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes

Vote: Motion Passes

Agenda Item: N.2
Subject: Consideration of the Approval of Proposed Tuition Rates for the 2020-2021 School Year

Motion Presented By: Ms. Bristol
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Makowski

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board approve of the 2020/2021 tuition rates as presented.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None
Abstained: None
Vote: Motion Passes

Agenda Item: N.3
Subject: Consideration to Approve the Non-Renewal of Non-Tenured Teachers

Motion Presented By: Ms. Rosa
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Makowski

Text of the Motion: So moved

Discussion: None

Opposed: None
Abstained: None
Vote: Motion Passes

O. Future Agenda Items and Board Members Comments

None

P. Adjournment

Agenda Item: P.1
Subject: To adjourn the meeting

Motion Presented By: Mr. Malagutti

Motion Seconded By: Ms. Wilk

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that we adjourn.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Vote: Motion Passes

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson
Recording Secretary

Janelle Wilk
Secretary of the Board