

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF McDOWELL  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION – APRIL 16, 2012**

**ASSEMBLY**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 16, 2012, in the Commissioners' Board Room, the usual place of meeting.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

David N. Walker, Chairman; Barry E. McPeters, Vice-Chairman; Andrew K. Webb; Michael K. Lavender; and Joshua R. Dobson.

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Charles R. Abernathy, County Manager; Carrie Padgett, Clerk to the Board; Ashley Wooten, Assistant to the County Manager (Filming); and reporter Mike Conley, for THE McDOWELL NEWS.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman David Walker called the meeting to order. The invocation was given by Commissioner Dobson, followed by the pledge of allegiance led by Commissioner McPeters.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes of the March 12, 2012 regular session were presented for approval.

Two corrections were made: 1) Under Various Legal Matters, specifically the Consent to Amendment for Wild Ridges and the motion made, Commissioner Dobson advised the minutes reflected that he had voted in the affirmative when actually he had voted the opposite; and 2) In reference to the item Change April Meeting Date, Chairman Walker pointed out that Commissioner *Webb* had made the motion and *he* (Walker) had seconded it (rather than Commissioner McPeters).

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to approve the minutes of March 12, 2012 as amended. Commissioner Dobson seconded and the vote was unanimous.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Walker asked if there were any additions to the agenda. County Manager Chuck Abernathy advised the County Attorney needed to follow up on the placement of the deed restrictions on the property in West Marion. He advised the grant had been closed out and there was no liability, and since the minutes need to reflect the status of the property, this item needed to be added. He said the property owner as well as the person interested may be present.

Chairman Walker agreed to add this item under Old Business.

Upon motion by Commissioner Dobson and a second by Commissioner McPeters, the agenda was approved as amended.

### **PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE FOR RELAY FOR LIFE**

Relay for Life Chairman Kendall Waugh and Co-Chairman Tonia Waycaster, came before the Board to present an award to the Board for their sponsorship in the Relay for Life Program. She advised their goal last year for Relay for Life was \$112,000. They surpassed that by raising \$128,398.37. They had 68 teams registered, 1,241 participants, and 240 survivors registered. Because of their survivor involvement and recognition, McDowell County was awarded the Power of Hope Award in Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Waugh presented the plaque to Chairman Walker, noting it is a Gold sponsorship award for 2011. She pointed out they had already surpassed their sponsorship from last year by \$400.00, and are now at \$33,000.

Commissioner Dobson stated he had attended the Annual Relay for Life event for the past 3-4 years and he wanted to commend Mrs. Waugh and other staff members for all they do in organizing this event. He noted there are people from other areas who come here for this event because of all that takes place, including the "Survivor Walk" which is very surreal.

### **CERTIFIED RETIREMENT COMMUNITY PRESENTATION**

Chairman Walker welcomed Freddie Killough, from the City of Marion, for a presentation on the Certified NC Retirement Community program, created and sponsored by the Department of Commerce.

Mrs. Killough advised the City of Marion will be the official applicant for this process. The program was created and sponsored by the Department of Commerce and was initiated last year. The City of Marion was contacted by the McDowell Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Development Authority about participating in the program because a municipality does have to be the applicant. She pointed out there is presently only one "certified community" in North Carolina and they think Marion and McDowell County far outshine the Town of Lumberton, which is fine.

The application is due July 31<sup>st</sup> and the partners in this effort will be the City of Marion, McDowell County, MEDA, McDowell Chamber of Commerce, McDowell Tourism Authority and the Marion Business Association. They have been meeting since December and they are working with the TDA to create a marketing strategy. There is a \$2,000 fee which they understand will be used to help market Marion as a “certified community” and North Carolina to those markets which they are seeking. A community meeting is being planned in near future which will be open to the public for comment. The designation as a “certified community” is for five years.

Mrs. Killough then gave a general summary of the things McDowell County has to offer that make it attractive as a “certified community”, including affordable housing, moderate weather, access to affordable health care, cultural resources, a low crime rate, easy access to metropolitan areas, outdoor activities and scenic attractions. She addressed who will be their target audience, what their interests and expectations might be, and what they will have to contribute in our community. Those involved with this effort want to be proactive as they plan for the future growth of the County.

A general discussion followed.

Commissioner Dobson made a motion to appropriate \$2,500 in next year’s budget as the County’s portion toward the fee for designation of a Certified NC Retirement Community in partnership with the other entities previously identified and to approve the related resolution. Commissioner Lavender seconded the motion and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

### **BUDGET UPDATE AND AMENDMENTS (INCLUDES SHERIFF VEHICLE FINANCING)**

The County Manager made reference to the monthly budget report of revenues and expenditures through March, as well as the monthly tax report from Tax Collections and the report of sales tax. The Finance Officer then reviewed the budget amendments as follows:

- GF 34 – Allocates funds from the Cable TV line item to pay for the projector, and makes several small transfers.
- GF 35 – This amendment is necessary because of the ever increasing numbers of EMS bills and collection activities that take place in Finance. The amendment comes from EMS revenue.
- GF 36 – Appropriates designated funds in the Sheriff’s Department including loan proceeds for vehicles and a payment made by our insurance for hail damage. It also makes several small transfers.
- GF 37 – Is in the Assessing Department and is largely the result of activity

closing down the Reval process.

GF 38 – Allocates various grants and the Relay for Life sponsorship. The amendment also has \$5,000 needed to make repairs to the Old Fort Pool due to a partial leak (not as extensive as the one experienced at the Marion Pool).

GF 39 – Allocates additional revenue received from the State for DSS and the Senior Center and also appropriates carry forward funds.

GF 40 – Allocates funds from the new enterprise fund to support twenty hours of maintenance and ten hours of clerical and finance for the Universal Building for a period of three months.

GF 41 – Pays for the entrance to the Pilot Plant and the handicapped space. The paving must occur in order for the rest of the grant money to be freed up. The Farm Bureau is agreeing to pay for 50% of the cost.

ENT-UCSC1 – Establishes the Enterprise Fund. (More detail on this will follow under the Universal Building update.)

HPRP1 – Is for the housing project/program initiated by DSS and approved by the Board that was funded by the federal Reinvestment Recovery Act. The amount was just short of \$750,000.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to authorize budget amendments GF #34 through GF 41, ENT-UCSC1, and HPRP1 as presented by staff. Commissioner Dobson seconded and by unanimous vote, the motion carried.

The Finance Officer then presented a request from the Sheriff's Department to finance \$114,960.00 for vehicles. They are requesting to purchase three (3) 2012 Ford AWD Interceptors and one (1) 2012 Ford 4x4 Utility Interceptor vehicle for use in the Sheriff's Department. BB&T responded with a rate of 2.07% for a period of four (4) years-semi annual payments in arrears beginning October, 2012. Mrs. Morgan advised that Carolina First and PNC did respond saying they could not bid at this time. She introduced the *Resolution Approving Financing Terms* for the Board's approval.

In discussion, Mrs. Morgan explained that if this financing is approved, the line item would increase in next year's budget by \$15,280 for payment in arrears.

Commissioner Webb asked if the Board might get more information for a clearer understanding of what the Sheriff's Department was requesting. For instance, how these vehicles line up with the Dodge Charger V-6s. Mr. Abernathy asked if staff could have the Sheriff provide an overview of those vehicles specifically, and why they are off State Contract. Mr. Webb said he would like to understand what the difference is in Ford AWD Interceptors versus a Dodge Charger. He pointed out that when the latter vehicles

were purchased previously, fuel mileage was an issue and he feels it is still an issue today. Commissioner Dobson concurred, saying he would like more information as well.

Further discussion followed.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to authorize the purchase and financing of three (3) 2012 Ford AWD Interceptors and one (1) 2012 Ford 4x4 Utility Interceptor as requested by the Sheriff's Department, including approval of the *Resolution Approving Financing Terms* with BB&T being the bidder with 2.07% for four years. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion and, in further discussion, expressed his feelings about the requested information.

In further discussion, the County Manager stated his understanding of the motion on the floor and how the results are expected to pan out. Mr. Abernathy suggested having the Sheriff come in to provide verification. Emergency Management Director Terry Young commented briefly, and agreed to call the Sheriff to verify information regarding the purchase of vehicles. Commissioner Webb then withdrew his second to the motion.

Commissioner Lavender then made a motion to table this item until later into the meeting. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion and by unanimous approval, the motion carried.

#### **UNIVERSAL PROPERTY UPDATE (INCLUDES ADVISORY COMMITTEE, ARCHITECT, ARC, LEASE)**

The County Manager made reference to his memo to the Board in which he addressed the large amount of work that staff and the County Attorney had done regarding this matter. He said he wanted to be clear that the loan amount was \$2,950,000 and in fact the County paid \$2,782,489 for the building. He pointed out the amount paid does not include additional expenses such as legal, survey, environmental, etc., as well as other additional expenses that must be made to satisfy the third lease to Total Quality Assurance.

For the benefit of the media, Mr. Abernathy advised that he, Dr. Wilson and Dr. Trollinger did meet with a sub-committee of the Golden Leaf Foundation Board and had a very successful meeting. The Golden Leaf Board did approve the allocation of \$2.1 million and there was good feedback.

Continuing, Mr. Abernathy stated that accolades and positive feedback sometimes come almost too frequently in government and it came from them as well, quite significantly on what we had proposed and how we went about doing things. He said the members in attendance were visibly amazed that we reached a consensus on this project and that other entities had withdrawn their applications for funding in support of this (the County's) application.

Mr. Abernathy made mention of the fact that the Board had voted to establish an advisory committee to provide counsel to the Board of Commissioners and to the Board of Trustees on decisions that will be made as they move forward. He pointed out that was not substance on the composition of the committee that was discussed, but he had spoken with Chairman Walker and he had sent this information about the committee to Drs. Wilson and Trollinger. He noted the composition being recommended is for the Trustees to appoint two, the Board of Commissioners two, Industry two, the City of Marion one, the Chamber of Commerce one, MEDA one and the Public School System one. Staff members would serve as liaisons only. He said while there was nothing compelling about doing this tonight, it was presented for discussion and feedback.

Continuing, Mr. Abernathy said the second general issue related to this was in regard to some discussion at the College that perhaps involved his choice of words in a previous memo. He said this still is healthy discussion and something that needs to be talked about. The issue pertains to the charge, the scope, and the mission. He pointed out it had been suggested that industry needs input on the design of an industrial skills center, that the Golden Leaf Board expects to be involved, and that the City of Marion has property between the College and this property; therefore they have an interest. Also, he said the Public School System has an interest as this moves forward because of the collaboration that may occur and may involve the College in programs such as the vocational program and the other new “career” initiative.

In conclusion, Mr. Abernathy said this was presented as a recommendation, with nothing compelling for action tonight, and he would ask for input as to the charge and scope.

In respect to the Board’s policy on making board appointments, Chairman Walker suggested that appointments to this advisory board be made like any other committee or board—having them advertised, with two readings, etc. Commissioner Lavender said he would prefer having greater business and industry representation on this committee and that it function similar to the Planning Board.

General discussion followed on the composition of the committee, who will appoint, who they represent, etc. A suggestion was made to have an odd number rather than an even one. Commissioner Webb said he thought a mission statement would be in order.

This item will be back on the agenda next month for further consideration.

Concerning the architect, Mr. Abernathy posed the idea of using Chuck Hamrick, with Holland and Hamrick from Shelby, noting that he had done similar projects and has served the County well. Mr. Abernathy then addressed the provisions of G.S. 143-64.31 and introduced a *Resolution Authorizing the Exemption from G.S. 143-64.31*.

A brief discussion followed.

Commissioner Webb made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the *Resolution Authorizing the Exemption from G.S. 143-64.31*.

Further discussion followed on the process used previously in selecting an architect, whether local ones had been used, etc.

By unanimous approval, the motion carried and the resolution was adopted as follows:

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXEMPTION FROM G.S. 143-64.31**

**WHEREAS**, G.S. 143-64.31 requires the initial selection of firms to perform architectural, engineering, and surveying services without regard to fee; and

**WHEREAS**, the County of McDowell proposes to enter into one or more contracts for such services for work on the Universal Building; and

**WHEREAS**, due to the areas of expertise needed in construction,

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF McDOWELL RESOLVES:**

Section 1. The above-described project is hereby made exempt from the provisions of G.S. 143-64.31 for the reasons stated in this resolution.

Section 2. This resolution shall be effective upon passage.

**ADOPTED** this the 16<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2012.

Next, Mr. Abernathy advised the County was submitting an ARC grant application in the amount of \$300,000 for the project. His Assistant, Ashley Wooten, is writing the grant. He said the County can use Golden Leaf funds for the match, and that an endorsement on the ARC application would be helpful.

Commissioner Dobson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Lavender, to endorse the ARC grant application. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

In reference to the Rural Center grant with Tilson Machine, Commissioner Webb asked about “sharing” aspects of the grant and how this would work. Mr. Abernathy said initially he had understood Tilson Machine would not use the full grant, but now they do plan to use all of it and there will be no cost share in this program for the County. However, Mr. Abernathy pointed out this is going into the County building and we benefit in the long run, noting also that Golden Leaf is funding what is happening in the community.

A general discussion followed on how this project is affecting other areas, the fact that young people are getting interested in this project because of the pay, limited education, etc. Also, Mr. Abernathy briefly updated the Board on the MEDA meeting and what had transpired there.

### **FORECLOSED PROPERTY IN LITTLE MOUNTAIN/OFFER**

The County Manager made reference to the bid from Mr. Nakia Carson as reported at the March meeting on the property in Little Mountain. The Board had agreed at this meeting to begin the process of conducting an upset bid process on the property. However, no bids were submitted.

Mr. Abernathy pointed out this is a very depressed piece of property, and Mr. Carson wants to clean it up, but had requested to make payments on the property instead of paying cash. Mr. Abernathy stated Mr. Carson had reasons for doing this, reasons that he thought were good ones. Therefore, Mr. Abernathy suggested allowing Mr. Carson to make payments, if the Board agreed. Further, Mr. Abernathy recommended an interest rate of 2% rather than a market rate, noting the gain here is to allow him to do what he wants to do in improvements to the property.

Commissioner Lavender said he would agree to the requested interest rate or even no rate.

In discussion, Mr. Abernathy clarified how the interest rate had been determined. Commissioner Webb pointed out how this could set a precedent for the future. Discussion of compromise, etc. followed.

Commissioner Webb then made a motion to authorize the sale of property at the rate of 5% with all other terms remaining consistent. Chairman Walker seconded the motion but said he wanted the market rate. Commissioner Webb agreed to amend his motion to say standard market rate with no amount of rate stated. Chairman Walker amended his second.

When put to a vote, the motion carried by a vote of 3-2 as follows:

In favor: Commissioner McPeters  
Commissioner Walker  
Commissioner Webb

Opposed: Commissioner Dobson  
Commissioner Lavender

### **BID APPROVAL FOR MAPLE LEAF RESTROOM**

Facility Maintenance Director Terry DePoyster advised bids were received and opened for new restrooms at the Maple Leaf Sports Complex on March 15, 2012. A total of eight (8) were received and all contractors were verified to be in good standing and licensed in North Carolina. He presented the following bid tabulation:

<u>General Contractor</u>	<u>Base Bid</u>	<u>Calendar Days</u>
England Builders	\$141,261	90-120
CSC Construction	\$149,000	120
Randolph Builders, Inc.	\$149,900	90
All Mechanical	\$159,700	90
Hall Builders	\$159,800	60-75
T.C. Strickland	\$163,806	90
Patton Construction	\$172,800	110
GEM Constructors	\$175,855	42

Mr. Abernathy gave a brief overview of the project and noted the low bid from England Builders in the amount of \$141,261. He said staff was recommending that the low bid be approved. Also, Mr. Abernathy pointed out other costs had been incurred with this project and the total cost would be \$175,234. He said this was actually on target with staff's projections. He suggested that payment for the project be paid from this fiscal year with an amendment to be prepared.

A brief discussion followed.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to approve the low bid from England Builders in the amount of \$141,261 and to authorize the project. Commissioner McPeters seconded the motion and by unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **GATED COMMUNITY ORDINANCE PRESENTATION**

Ron Harmon, County Planner, updated the Board on changes made to the Gated Community Ordinance since the last reading. Major points of the document were reviewed as follows:

- The Planning Board defined Residential Development in a numerical sense. Their reasoning was that in instances where a private landowner may have a gate on his property, the Planning Board did not want the private landowner to have to meet the rules of this document in those cases.
- The Fire Commission and the Planning Board had agreed at their joint meeting to include a provision in the document that would require gates to have 2 automated means of opening and 1 manual means of opening. This would allow for the gate to be opened without power.

- The Planning Board left out a numerical amount on time that all gates must come into compliance. The Board felt it best left to the Board of Commissioners to make that determination.
- The Planning Board also left blank dollar amounts for penalties, again letting the Board of Commissioners make this determination.
- The Fire Commission recommends a system that is sold by Grindstaff Fencing, a lock box style system that costs around \$200.00. All members of the Fire Commission agreed this is the easiest system to operate in emergency situations.

A general discussion followed.

### **YMCA TRAIL UPDATE**

Ron Harmon provided a brief update, advising Phase I of the YMCA Trail is essentially complete. May 25<sup>th</sup> is the date set for the dedication of Phase I and the kick-off for Phase II.

Discussion followed as to whether there are rules in place to address having both bikes and elderly people walking on the trail at potentially the same time, and what the intent of the Trails Association might be regarding landscaping, planting of shrubs, etc. along the trail. The idea of involving senior citizens was mentioned, including having them maintain the trail since it is in close proximity to the Senior Center.

### **GRANT WRITER PROPOSAL**

As an introduction, the County Manager made reference to the amount of times grants had been mentioned, noting that he had met with Mark Goldstein and Chris Ansbury from a company called Communication Mark regarding a concept that he wanted to propose concerning some potential grant opportunities. He pointed out that one member of the Board wants to use the concept for sizable grants rather than small ones (\$10-15,000).

Mr. Goldstein then gave an overview and background of his work, including raising funds for various effects.

Chairman Walker asked about the projects he has worked on, the amount of grants, etc., including his success rate. In response, Mr. Goldstein advised that in six months, he had raised about \$2.6 million in grants.

Commissioner Lavender expressed a concern on the bonus amount relative to smaller grants. Mr. Goldstein advised he was willing to waive the bonus if the Board would prefer to pay the standard fee.

Discussion followed on the value Mr. Goldstein and his company would be to the County.

### **AUTHORIZE BIDDING FOR WHEEL LOADER**

Public Works Director Mike Gladden came before the Board to request replacement of the wheel loader at the Transfer Station. He pointed out it had been almost 6½ years since he was present making this request for the previous loader, and that only three loaders had been bought since 1994. He said they had gained two years in this process. Further, Mr. Gladden pointed out he would like to use the current unit to handle cardboard. He estimated the replacement unit to be \$180,000.

The County Manager confirmed that staff is looking at three to four months to purchase, order, finance, etc.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to approve the bidding of the wheel loader as requested by County staff. Commissioner McPeters seconded the motion. In discussion, Commissioner Lavender commented briefly on the need, the financing schedule, etc. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **LIEN ON PROPERTY/CDBG GRANT (SCATTERED SITE HOUSING GRANT)**

County Attorney Fred Coats addressed the matter of the lien on the Walker property and the CDBG grant. He explained the County's options with this matter according to Isothermal Planning and Development Commission Director Jim Edwards, noting that he and the County Manager recommended proceeding on a second deed of trust. Mr. Coats said he was going to try pursuing having the seller pay for the correction, pointing out the seller wants to get this done and the County did not make the mistake and should not pay for it.

A brief discussion followed.

Commissioner Lavender then made a motion to authorize the County Attorney to work with the appropriate attorney to get the appropriate changes made to move this matter forward expeditiously. Commissioner Dobson seconded the motion.

A brief discussion followed and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

### **SHERIFF VEHICLE FINANCING**

At this time Terry Young came forward with a report from the Sheriff's Department on the vehicles discussed previously in the meeting. In reference to the Ford Interceptor, he advised the Sheriff said this is a 3.5 liter V-6 engine, the miles per gallon is 18 in the City, and 26 on the highway. The Charger has a 3.6 liter V-6 engine, and it is 18 mpg in the City and 27 on the highway.

Chairman Walker thanked Mr. Young for making the call and asked if there was any discussion. Commissioner Webb thanked staff and the Board for working through

this matter. He said the question had been answered and “it is absolutely wonderful”. He had no further questions.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to authorize the purchase and financing of Sheriff’s vehicles with BB&T at the low bid rate of 2.07%. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

### **RURAL CENTER CONTRACT**

The NC Rural Center had recently awarded McDowell County a \$240,000 building reuse grant for the Tilson Machine Project. Tilson is committed to hiring 20 new people in order to receive the grant. The contract between the NC Rural Center and McDowell County was presented for the Board’s approval. According to staff, the contract is similar in scope to contracts for prior reuse grant projects.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the building reuse contract between the NC Rural Center and McDowell County as presented. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **CITIZEN COMMENT**

Since no one had signed up to speak, no comments from citizens were heard.

### **BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

Three vacancies on the Planning Board were considered on second reading. The applicants were Max Boyd, Benny Stamey, and C.B. Edwards, each for re-appointment.

The Board voted by written ballot on the three applicants. By unanimous vote, Max Boyd, Benny Stamey, and C.B. Edwards were each re-appointed.

### **DOT MEETING/HIGHWAY 221 SOUTH WIDENING**

The County Manager advised the North Carolina Department of Transportation had provided data projections in regard to the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), and IPDC’s Planner, Josh King, had requested that those projections be presented to the Board of Commissioners. The statistics to be used for the County include employment, projected employment, road grades, etc. Mr. King said DOT wanted the Board’s endorsement for the use of those statistics. Mr. Abernathy stated that in all his years with the County, he had never seen anything like this and he saw no reason of why statistics are an issue, but apparently the Board’s input and endorsement is being sought.

Commissioner Lavender said the County’s local DOT had been one of the best groups with which to work. He said he would have no problem endorsing the use of the statistics—whether right or wrong, they are *their* statistics.

Mr. Abernathy said his recommendation would be for the Board to go on record saying they have no problem with the statistics they are using for planning purposes.

Commissioner Webb asked for a bit more information to better understand the scope of what all this might entail down the road. He asked if this is just DOT figures or would it go into the economic needs, or would it define DOT. Mr. Abernathy advised the Comprehensive Transportation Plan depends on statistics, demographics, traffic counts, etc. Further discussion followed.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dobson, to endorse the statistics as requested. The motion carried by a vote of 4-1 as follows:

In Favor: Commissioner Dobson	Opposed: Commissioner Walker
Commissioner Lavender	
Commissioner McPeters	
Commissioner Webb	

Concerning the Highway 221 South Widening, the County Manager explained letters were being compiled from Haldex/Industrial Park occupants, the Chamber of Commerce, TDA, the City of Marion, and that he had drafted one as well. He stated what everyone wants is to make sure the approach says we are looking at taking the divided highway down, bypassing the Goose Creek Road, to a five-lane, minimizing the right of way, and doing the layout in a manner that minimizes destruction of our existing businesses. He noted meetings he has had with the City, some industry, and others to get word out that the Commissioners are on board with this.

Commissioner Lavender stated he fully endorsed what the County Manager was proposing. In further statement, Commissioner Lavender commented on his attendance at the meeting, seeing the big maps, etc. He said in the area south of I-40 on 226 (Steakhouse, two hotels, etc.) they had two proposals—one develops slightly east of I-40; one slightly west side of I-40. In addition to what Mr. Abernathy was proposing, Commissioner Lavender said he would prefer that the Board endorse the development to the west side of I-40. He said he thought the whole goal of everything being done is to minimize the impact to local businesses and property in that area, and that is his reason for saying this.

Discussion followed with each member saying what he felt about the proposal. By consensus, the Board concurred on letting them (DOT) decide.

Commissioner Dobson made a motion to endorse the letter presented to them concerning DOT's widening of Highway 221 South. Commissioner Lavender seconded the motion and by unanimous approval, the motion carried.

## **TAX MATTERS**

The usual listing of tax releases and refunds was presented for the Board's approval. In summary, they were:

Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$375.63
Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$8,037.59
Motor Vehicle Releases/Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$1,084.86
Motor Vehicle Releases/Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$784.15
Release Refunds	Refunded amount of \$1,643.49

Andy commented on the item from last meeting.

Commissioner Webb made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the tax releases and refunds as presented. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

## **WATER SYSTEM UPDATE**

The County Manager pointed out the Board had already established direction on where they wanted to have water lines go and they were looking at coming off 126 but the real push is not in that area but on three areas which are Lonesome Pine Drive, Misty Mountain Subdivision, and Stacey Hill. He pointed out there is real interest on Lonesome Pine (it is a short extension but to him it is expensive), but it is really not conducive to grants or other funding sources. He said Stacey Hill might be something to pursue due to the well situations there, and mentioned the location of the master meter and the related issue in trying to determine where the City's part would end and the County would pick up. He pointed out to go up Stacey Hill and have that be a County line would require a master meter being placed there and to have the City agree for us to do that. Secondly, he said he thought Stacey Hill is a good grant opportunity and both Lonesome Pine and Misty Mountain are both very interested.

In discussion, the Board indicated consensus on pursuing Stacey Hill due to the opportunity for grants, its location for connecting with other lines, etc.

## **NATURAL GAS EXPANSION DISCUSSION**

The County Manager advised there is an interest with Banner Greenhouses to receive natural gas and PSNC has asked for endorsement in a general manner. He said Representative Mitch Gillespie has taken leadership and ownership on this and feels there are some grant opportunities, and has suggested that the County apply for at least one grant based on the job creation. Mr. Abernathy pointed out this is an economic

development matter and noted how Banner Greenhouses would benefit and would cooperate in this effort.

A general discussion followed.

Commissioner Webb made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McPeters, to endorse this project in principle as requested by the natural gas companies to allow them to pursue their investment opportunities. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

A brief discussion followed on other economic development opportunities that exist in that general area.

### **APPROVE DATE FOR PUBLIC HEARING FOR SECONDARY ROADS**

The County Manager advised the Clerk had been coordinating the date for the Annual Public Hearing on Secondary Roads with the Department of Transportation. The DOT is suggesting the date of May 14<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Abernathy asked that the Board approve this date if they were in agreement. By consensus, the Board agreed to schedule the Public Hearing on Secondary Roads for May 14<sup>th</sup>, their next regular meeting date.

### **REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The County Manager was pleased to announce that McDowell County had received the fourth award from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. The award will be received on May 7<sup>th</sup> for the Energy Panels. He suggested having the award presented at the Senior Center with the elderly citizens present.

Also, Mr. Abernathy advised the Ribbon Cutting for the Pilot Plant will be held on site on May 9<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m. Plans are to have an inmate there.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to transact at this time, upon motion by Commissioner Lavender, a second by Commissioner Dobson, and by unanimous approval, the meeting was adjourned.

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DAVID N. WALKER, CHAIRMAN

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CARRIE PADGETT  
CLERK TO THE BOARD

