

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF McDOWLL
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – FEBRUARY 11, 2013**

ASSEMBLY

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, February 11, 2013 in the Commission Boardroom, the usual meeting place.

MEMBERS PRESENT

David N. Walker, Chairman; Michael K. Lavender; Van Randy Hollifield

THOSE ABSENT

Barry E. McPeters, Vice-Chairman

For the record, Joshua R. (Josh) Dobson had resigned as County Commissioner, effective January 29, 2013, having been appointed to the North Carolina House of Representatives for District 85 (representing Avery, McDowell and Mitchell). Representative Dobson is replacing former Representative Mitch Gillespie who had resigned from his State House seat to become Assistant Secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

OTHERS PRESENT

Charles R. Abernathy, County Manager; Carrie Padgett, Clerk to the Board; Ashley Wooten, Assistant to the County Manager (Filming); and Mike Conley, Report for The McDowell News

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Walker called the meeting to order. Commissioner Lavender gave the invocation, followed by the pledge of allegiance, led by Commissioner Hollifield.

Chairman Walker pointed out they were one commissioner short and he wanted to congratulate Commissioner Dobson on being selected to replace Representative Mitch Gillespie. He advised the Executive Committee was meeting tonight, and would be picking a replacement for Commissioner Dobson's seat on the Board of Commissioners. Further, on behalf of the Board, Chairman Walker said they wish him the very best. He asked the County Manager to communicate with Representative Dobson frequently and to let him know the Board is willing to work with him.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

With no changes being made to the agenda, Commissioner Lavender moved its approval. Commissioner Hollifield seconded the motion and by unanimous approval of those present, the agenda was approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of the December 3, 2012 and the January 14, 2013 regular sessions were presented for approval.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to table the minutes for this meeting to allow Commissioner McPeters to be present. Commissioner Hollifield seconded the motion and by unanimous approval of those present, the minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

With no changes to be made to the agenda, Commissioner Lavender made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Hollifield seconded the motion and the agenda as unanimously approved.

RESOLUTION HONORING MARTHA BUFF

At this time Chairman Walker welcomed Martha Buff who had recently retired as the Administrative Secretary for McDowell Soil and Water Conservation District. Also, the Chairman recognized former Commissioner Dean Buff who had served 22 years as a County Commissioner. With reference to the plaque on the Board Room wall, Chairman Walker asked that Mr. Buff make note of the plaque before he left. He said he appreciated Mr. Buff's service to the County on behalf its citizens.

County Manager Chuck Abernathy stated Martha Buff was retiring after 28 years of service to the County. He said her leadership is exemplary—in fact it's unbelievable when one looks at the resolution—and people understand the impact she had in her years of service locally. However, when one looks nationally, she was known in Soil Conservation offices all across the entire country and she affected change across the entire country. Mr. Abernathy said it had been a real pleasure to work with her and to have her leadership both locally and nationally.

A Resolution was introduced entitled "Resolution Establishing February 14th as Martha Buff Appreciation Day".

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to adopt the resolution honoring Martha Buff and naming February 14th, 2013 as "Martha Buff Appreciation Day". Commissioner Hollifield seconded the motion and by unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Chairman Walker then read the following resolution:

Resolution

Establishing February 14th as Martha Buff Appreciation Day

WHEREAS, Martha Buff has been employed by McDowell County since 1985 as the Soil Conservation Coordinator and announced her retirement in 2013, and

WHEREAS, Martha Buff has achieved unsurpassed service to the citizens of McDowell County by presenting programs, hosting youth speech and poster contests, and being involved in the community, and

WHEREAS, Martha supported the community in many ways including Chairing the United Way, President of the Nebo Elementary PTO, President of the Marion Rotary Club, Chairperson of MACA and a member of the Nebo Baptist Church since 1959, and

WHEREAS, some of Martha's most noteworthy accomplishments occurred at the Nation and State level including a Master 3 Level for District Employees (2005), being the Founding President of the North Carolina District Employees Association (1990), the Founding President of the South East (U.S.) Conservation District Employee's Association (1993), and President of the National Conservation District Employee's Association (1999), and

WHEREAS, Martha received the Meritorious Service Award for the State of North Carolina (2002), the North Carolina Conservation District Professional Award (2003), the Southeast Conservation District Employees of the Year Award (2007), and received the National Conservation District Employees Association Employee Choice Award, and

WHEREAS, Martha is married to former County Commissioner Dean Buff and dedicated to her daughter Deanna and husband Chris and three grandchildren, Jake (8), Job (6) and Jonas (3 months).

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE McDOWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

That February 14, 2013 is hereby celebrated by the citizens of McDowell County and across the State as "Martha Buff Appreciation Day" and that she receive all of the honor and appreciation for her outstanding and dedicated service.

And, that Martha Buff and Dean have a fruitful and joyous retirement enjoying each other's company as well as the company of her daughter, son-in-law, and three grandchildren.

ADOPTED, THIS THE 11TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2013.

Chairman Walker then presented the framed resolution to Mrs. Buff on behalf of the Board.

Mrs. Beverly Foster, a member of the McDowell Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors, praised Mrs. Buff for her work and coordination of educational programs within the school system. She pointed out there had been many winners among the students who had participated in these programs, and that McDowell County has had three "Teachers of the Year" as well. She said Mrs. Buff had always been positive in her work.

Bill Lonon, Soil and Water Conservation District Technician, stated it had been a real pleasure working with Martha and he wished her well.

Martha stated she appreciated what had been done for her today and that she had had twenty-eight wonderful years and that she had a very supportive Soil Conservation Board with whom to work. She thanked the Board of Commissioners for their support during her years of employment with McDowell County, and for giving her the latitude to support soil and water conservation across our great nation. She thanked Mr. Abernathy for being such a progressive County Manager and that she appreciated his leadership.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS AND UPDATE

In his monthly budget update, the County Manager advised he had not received the report of sales tax yet and would provide an update later. Concerning tax collections, a total of \$16,220,912.77 had been collected as of January 31, 2013 for a percentage of 89.72% through the same period. This shows an outstanding balance of \$1,868,835.51.

Mr. Abernathy presented the following budget amendments:

GF 27 – Involves small shifts of funds that the Board allows staff to do with a report made to the Board

GF 28 – Receives from the State the One NC grant for the Jaynesville expansion. \$30,000 was received and will be disbursed.

GF 29 – Does two things. First, State assistance on the elections was budgeted as if funds would be received; the County did not receive the allocation and this requires \$21,200. Secondly, Buildings and Grounds budget was increased by \$16,660.00 for another HVAC system that had to be replaced at the Health Department

GF 30 – 911 reimbursement funds were budgeted to utilize those funds for the utility costs at the 911 Center. The items allowed for refund continue to change and we are not permitted to use 911 funds for utility expenses,

even though the funds have been used previously in this manner.

GF 31 – Transfers funds within the Sheriff’s Department budget to handle a number of items including HVAC and recognizes quite a bit of new revenue in the concealed carry fee.

GF 32 – Allocates \$38,000 to MTCC capital funding to cover the repair cost of a sewer line to the main administration building and the Early College Building.

ENT 3 – Occurs in the Enterprise Fund. The amendment reduces an expense to offset the recycling revenue that was spent for the concrete and the skid loader. No new money is expended with this amendment, but rather it places money in reserve to balance the fund equal to the amount that had accumulated.

Discussion of the enterprise fund followed.

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Lavender, to approve the budget amendments as presented. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

TAX LIEN ADVERTISEMENTS

Tax Collector Phyllis Ryan came before the Board to present the 2012 Real Property Tax Lien Report. Also, per NCGS 105-369, to request authorization to advertise the tax lien for all unpaid 2012 real property tax bills. She suggested the advertising date be set for Wednesday, May 8, 2013.

The McDowell News, the only newspaper media for advertising the 2012 unpaid taxes, had presented the following quote:

\$6.96 per column inch

\$876.96 per page x 5 pages = \$4,384.50 – approximately \$2.15 per name

Discussion followed on putting the tax liens on the web. Mrs. Ryan advised she could not download that information for that purpose at this point.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hollifield, to authorize placing the tax liens for advertisement with The McDowell News on May 8th at the quoted price. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

SAM ARROWOOD INSURANCE REQUEST

Former Chief Deputy Sam Arrowood, now retired, was scheduled to be on the agenda concerning an insurance request (making a change to the retiree insurance plan

made in July of 2011). Mr. Arrowood was not present; therefore, the County Manager reviewed the policy put in place in 2011. He advised the policy affected the retiree insurance plan in that it eliminated retiree coverage for all new hires and eliminated the ability to cover spouses on the County's insurance. Mr. Abernathy pointed out what the retiree insurance plan essentially did was to provide \$100,000 over the period of time that the employee retired until they reached the age of 65 and were eligible for federal programs. It was capped at \$100,000. What the new federal legislation with health care reform did was to remove our ability to cap retiree insurance, so the cap was removed, thus eliminating a great deal of liability since the County is self-insured. He pointed out the vote was unanimous and everyone was notified of the Board's action. Now there have been two people who have asked for consideration regarding the change in policy. Mr. Abernathy said the insurance carrier was consulted and they will not allow an exception being made without amending the plan, and even if the plan were amended, they may not accept it. He said there are 65 people who would be eligible to go back on the plan if it were amended—again unlimited coverage.

Discussion followed on the fact that Mr. Arrowood was not present. Commissioner Lavender asked whether Mr. Arrowood had been reminded of the appointment since other parties involved were present. He said he thought it was good professional policy to remind people and he would prefer holding this item open to allow Mr. Arrowood the opportunity to make an appearance and be heard.

Chairman Walker said unless there was something extreme that had come up, Mr. Arrowood had indicated he wanted to be here, he knew about the appointment, and the policy had received a 5-0 vote, therefore he did not see why the item should be left open.

Commissioner Lavender advised he was not saying they should deal with the policy again—just give Mr. Arrowood opportunity to be heard.

CHAMBER INTERNET COMMITTEE/TOWER SPACE REQUEST

First, the County Manager spoke briefly about the excitement generated by this item, noting he was confident the Commissioners would share the excitement as well.

Brian Rathbone, Senior Telecommunications Specialist with NC Broadband, a division of the North Carolina Department of Commerce, provided a general summary of his involvement with the McDowell Broadband planning group in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce. The McDowell Broadband planning team had been working for a number of years doing some studies, and at the end of those studies began looking for a plan of action. They invited Foothills Connect, a non-profit from Rutherford County who was working on an Appalachian Regional Commission grant in the amount of \$100,000 to put transmitters along Rutherford County lines to serve Rutherford, McDowell, and Burke Counties. Specifically, they were interested in areas where people were unlikely to get service otherwise through traditional wire-line extensions.

At the time there was a proposal on getting ARC to do a wireless propagation study to determine the feasibility of this type of network and they invited Skyrunner along with Foothills Connect to come to one of their planning meetings. It was recommended, rather than have the county spend the match on that grant, that it could be done in cooperation with Foothills Connect, Skyrunner and the Department of Commerce. At that point they began their research. As a result they essentially found there were three tower sites applicable to providing that level of service. Two would be ideal, one being the tower on Grant's Mountain; the other was the tower on Rich Mountain owned by REMC. They were unable to get an equitable deal with REMC although that tower would have been an ideal site. The third site was the water tower near the prison north of Glenwood which would have put service for some of the folks in that area.

Mr. Rathbone advised as a result of the survey the Chamber of Commerce sent out, the two primary areas that were identified were the Glenwood area and the Montford Cove area, both areas of un-served demands. In talking with the carriers it was unlikely they would not get served by traditional expansions. He advised what has been done in other parts of western North Carolina is to partner with a wireless internet service provider who is willing to come into the area. Also for the County to consider providing low cost or free access to that tower or, in this case, perhaps tower access in exchange for services to public safety organizations and county facilities.

Others involved in this project were Don Davis from Skyrunner, Rod Birdsong with the Chamber of Commerce, Keith Conover from NC Broadband, Jim Edwards with Isothermal Planning and Development, Keith Buchanan from A Plus Networking Services, and Terry Young, Emergency Management Director.

Keith Conover advised they had tested about 10 locations at the Chamber's request, some where the tower was visible and a signal could be received, but the equipment was bad for testing purposes. There were sites that either may have duplicate services or have had service and may not have it today.

Commissioner Lavender had a question on the type and level of service and the cost to provide that service. Mr. Davis addressed this, noting both residential and commercial services. He said the Grant's Mountain site is just a starting point and they have a site in Montford Cove with a resident who has a small tower, in which case they would provide the owner complimentary service in exchange for permission to install a tower on his property. He pointed out there are more residential sites than commercial towers and they are eager to work with people who do not have the service, noting they do not need 10,000 potential customers in order to go to a new area, only five or six.

Mr. Abernathy pointed out the question before the Board is tower space on a county-owned tower—the gain being over 2,000 households that currently have no high-speed internet available, in addition to which competitive service will be created. With reference to the public school's successful Golden Leaf grant with the One to One initiative, which will become a routine issue for the County more so than it is now, Mr.

Abernathy pointed out what the County hopes to do is structure a favorable lease situation on the tower. The State had looked at the rate and suggested that we are high, at least in relationship to the business model that we need in order to get the less affordable homes served. Therefore we want a favorable tower lease for this company.

Mr. Birdsong commented on the County's benefits in terms of enhancement of emergency communications, the educational and business growth aspect, and the in-kind return. He pointed out that he and Mr. Abernathy had met with all the local service providers regarding the lack of service in rural areas, but had found those areas are not on a level playing field and will not be. He mentioned the fact that Skyrunner serves eight counties in the state with terrain similar to McDowell that would otherwise not be served.

Mr. Abernathy pointed out after their meeting he remembered that the Board of Commissioners had granted free space to Verizon at the County's Nebo Convenience Center for switching equipment, and the tradeoff was that high-speed internet was extended all through the Nebo community. That was the logic and value of what was received, so it is a very similar situation.

Again, Mr. Abernathy pointed out the question is the leasing of space on the County's tower on Grant's Mountain and Terry Young has assured him there is space on the tower. He also says the substantial benefit to several fire departments with poor service would occur. Providing the additional internet service will help small business development and children as the County moves to the One to One initiative.

A general discussion followed. Chairman Walker said since the County's emergency services and fire departments provide a service and sometimes do not have the funds necessary to do certain things, would there be a way to negotiate a reduced rate for them and/or free. Commissioner Lavender said he would be inclined to have staff work out some details with these folks whereby we would negotiate for the three areas (Law Enforcement, EMS and eligible fire departments because of their line of sight, etc. and/or County offices) and the issue of seeking out additional sites where there is a tower that exists or some other area that could handle another location. He said he would be in favor of doing it at no cost as opposed to the graduated fee plan. Commissioner Hollifield was in agreement with Commissioner Lavender's idea.

Mr. Abernathy asked if the Board could give some directions on how staff would proceed, with this being kind of a base level of negotiation and being copied on what staff is able to accomplish, or have it placed back on the agenda for the Board's approval without any one else coming back.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lavender to authorize County staff to work with Skyrunner and the Broadband Committee to negotiate free space on the Grant's Mountain tower in exchange for favorable consideration of either free or greatly reduced service dollars to the Sheriff's Department, EMS, those County buildings, and whatever number of fire departments that would be eligible for this, and that those County sites be either a repeater or tower site, with the Board copied on what is done. Commissioner

Hollifield seconded the motion and a brief discussion followed. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Mr. Abernathy said when One to One is initiated, could there be consideration given to having points throughout the County where kids can have public access if they do not have internet available in their homes? Keith Buchanan addressed how this could be made possible not only for the kids but for others access as well. Mr. Abernathy asked Mr. Young to coordinate this aspect of the project.

VARIOUS GRANT APPROVALS:

EMS:

EMS Director William Kehler came before the Board to request the submission of a grant in the amount of \$283,883 to the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation in an effort to establish and implement a Community Care Paramedic Program. He said this program is new to the EMS profession and currently in North Carolina two counties have implemented the Community Care Paramedic Program, Wake and Robeson counties. He pointed out Wake had started the program several years ago and he had watched the program closely, working with them in the therapeutic hypothermia program that McDowell has initiated. Essentially the Community Care Program is designed with a three part objective of better care, better outcomes, and lower costs. They propose to target three areas, the first being EMS. He pointed out in the Emergency Department there are patients identified as "high utilizers". Through the use of pre-hospital case management, Mr. Kehler feels these patients could be transitioned to primary care, thereby decreasing EMS calls for service and visits to local emergency departments.

Secondly, they would work collaboratively with the hospital case managers in identifying patients being discharged home with a diagnosis of CHF, acute respiratory ailments, or heart attack in an effort to reduce re-admission rates of these patients. He pointed out they have a letter of support from the hospital regarding this aspect of the program.

Thirdly, they would be heavily involved in each community to establish a wellness check before problems arise. He emphasized the extensive amount of partnerships they have formed with this program, noting letters of support from the McDowell Hospital, the Fire Commission, the fire departments, the YMCA, Good Samaritan, the Health Department, DSS, McDowell Tech, and McDowell Mission Ministries.

Mr. Kehler said the funds would be for three years and would include salaries/benefits, equipment, training, supplies, and other items such as uniforms, cellular charge, and safety equipment. After the three years, they will seek other funding sources in order to sustain the program.

A general discussion followed.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to authorize submission of the Kate B. Reynolds grant due to the benefits to the various agencies, cost benefits, etc. Commissioner Hollifield seconded the motion. In discussion, the Board commended Mr. Kehler on being a forward thinker, in forming community partnerships, and being proactive in seeking additional funding sources three years out. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Cooperative Extension:

Molly Sandfoss, County Extension Director, stated last August the Board adopted a local foods resolution by promoting McDowell County's local food economy, and in doing this they showed that county government does play an important role in supporting the local food system.

In January, 2013, Mrs. Sandfoss submitted a TDA Agriculture/Forestry funds letter of intent for local foods promotion in McDowell County. In the letter of intent, she proposed that we promote local foods in the County by hosting a local foods week during which they would have an agriculture breakfast highlighting local foods, would hold farm tours, cooking demonstrations, etc. She planned to produce a local foods video and also do some tailgate market promotions. Unfortunately, she was informed today the letter of intent did not receive favorable consideration due to the competitive nature of the grant, but she intends to pursue other projects.

Another project that her agency plans to initiate is Project EMMA (Eat Better, Move More, Age Well), a program that will target the senior population. Other counties have implemented the program, one of which is Buncombe where the program has been very successful. Mrs. Sandfoss mentioned several ideas she has for promoting the program in McDowell.

Continuing, Mrs. Sandfoss advised Extension Service works with the Historic Marion Tailgate Market and, in talking with the City of Marion they have agreed to submit a grant proposal to hire a Tailgate Market manager. This will increase the customer base at the market and will help increase access to fresh local foods for the whole community.

Further, Extension Service works with the community garden located at the YMCA. The Extension gardeners helped to plan and build the community garden which was completed last March. The initial plan was to rent the beds to individuals; however, the beds were not rented last year. They are trying to develop a plan to make the garden productive, and in January she applied for a grant through N.C. State University to use the community garden to produce food for the food insecure in the community. She did receive that grant and the Extension master gardeners will take the lead on this project and will use 10 of the beds to produce food. Other logistics of the plan still have to be determined, such as how distribution of the food will go. She advised she wants to see the beds productive, as do the master gardeners. They will offer educational programs,

will hold a gardening workshop at the Senior Center and will use the community garden as a hands-on tool as part of the workshop.

A brief discussion followed. Mr. Abernathy noted that Mrs. Sandfoss had hosted the committee meeting today and had people from Buncombe County down explaining how they had implemented the EMMA Program. He said this was impressive and he believed the program would be successful in McDowell. Chairman Walker offered the use of the government Channel in producing and marketing the foods video.

Concerning other projects (community park, six Hospice inpatient beds, grant for Old Fort facilities) for which letters of support or grant information was received, Chairman Walker asked if there were any questions regarding the various projects. A suggestion was made to endorse the Old Fort facilities grant proposal from the Recreation Director since she is a department head in order to be consistent with a previous grant submission (EMS).

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to endorse the letters of support and/or grant submissions that are in the agenda packet, including the initiative at the Recreation Department of Parents Taking Charge. Commissioner Hollifield seconded the motion and by unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Next, Commissioner Lavender made reference to two letters of support he had written. He pointed out the Mental Health Board is constantly looking for ways to provide more and better services for their clients. They are in the process of submitting several Kate B. Reynolds grants, two of which will specifically affect our area.

Concerning the first letter and as the Mental Health Board representative for McDowell County, he said he would point out there is a group that has been meeting at the Hospital looking at the emergency department initiative. Smoky Mountain Mental Health Center has identified Kate B. Reynolds as a potential grant source. They contacted Mr. Lavender on Thursday and asked him to write a letter of support (references the community capacity building). The goal here is to work with physicians' offices, community groups, etc. to better help educate both the public as well as medical providers about ways to provide a more appropriate level of care at the lower levels to prevent folks going to the emergency room in a crisis with no place to go for either facility-based crisis or psychiatric hospitalization. He said there is potential, through identifying alternatives for these folks and by educating them about other options, that they will hopefully not only keep them out of crisis more but will prevent overloading the emergency room with folks waiting for a crisis bed somewhere.

Concerning the other letter, Commissioner Lavender stated Smoky Mountain Center is divided into three regions, McDowell being part of the central region (McDowell, Caldwell and Alexander Counties). He pointed out hospital beds, facility-based crisis beds, and detox beds are in constant demand. Also, the Sheriff's Department is often busy with other situations and unable to make transports and there are a lot of transports, although there is now a cooperative agreement that has eliminated some of

this situation. What this grant proposal would do is take their provider (RHA) and co-locate the facility-based Crisis Center in Caldwell County which would serve all three regions. RHA is partnering with them on this grant and had sent information to him earlier today endorsing the letters. The letters were copied to the Board of Commissioners, and were being sent out today. Commissioner Lavender stated if the grant is received, this will be a great opportunity for Smoky Mountain particularly, in his opinion, for facility-based crisis because there is such a need for that now in the short term; in the long term, the other will hopefully do some of the same thing.

Chairman Walker thanked Commissioner Lavender, on behalf of the Board, for his work with Smoky Mountain Center regarding the grant. He said the drafting of the letters was great and he appreciated his work on them as well.

PUBLIC HEARING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

At 6:30 p.m. as duly advertised, Chairman Walker declared the Board in public hearing for discussion of an economic development project in accordance with NCGS 158-7.1. He asked Economic Development Director Chuck Abernathy to address the project.

Mr. Abernathy advised a public hearing is required to satisfy the economic development statutes and the granting of incentives. The company would hire 52 people over a three-year period and will pay wages that exceed the current county average. The project has caused the State to submit a \$156,000 One NC incentive grant and it is now a matter of waiting for the process to transpire. The One NC program requires a local match equal to the amount approved by the State. To accomplish this, the incentive would involve two years of free lease in the Universal Building involving approximately 40,000 square feet. McDowell County will also apply for additional funding with the NC Rural Center Building Reuse Program.

Chairman Walker opened the floor for public comment. There was no response from any one present.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to go out of public hearing. Commissioner Hollifield seconded the motion and by unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Commissioner Hollifield then made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Lavender, to provide the incentive package to the company as presented by Mr. Abernathy. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

PRESENTATION ON COLLEGE FOUNDATION FUND DRIVE

Chairman Walker welcomed Dr. Bryan Wilson, President of McDowell Technical Community College, for a presentation on the College Foundation Fund Drive entitled "Partnering for Progress". Chairman Walker stated Dr. Wilson and the Board of Trustees

have worked hand in hand with the Board of Commissioners and the Universal Committee to continue to make progress. He pointed out, as the Board has always said and continues to say and he is Chairman of the Committee too, “Things are done by working together”.

Dr. Wilson thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity of meeting with them. He mentioned the situation going on at the College and how the Foundation is working toward following up on the initiative going on at the Universal facility. The Foundation had hired a consulting firm over a year and a half ago to conduct a feasibility study to determine what they might do to raise private funds to help the College with the facility. They did research to see what everyone feels about a fund raising effort and to give the Foundation recommendation on whether to proceed forward or not. During this process some focus group meetings were held and a presentation was given. Commissioner Lavender had helped to prepare the presentation and Mr. Abernathy, along with others, was invited to participate. Dr. Wilson was pleased to report at this point that most of response received had been positive, and most of the people with whom they have talked have indicated a willingness to contribute and have seemed excited with what is happening. He said because of the importance of this effort and with the support received from the industrial community, they feel confident they do have the capacity to move forward. He pointed out the decision of whether they proceed with doing and launching this campaign will be made by the Foundation Board at their March meeting.

Dr. Wilson said Mr. Abernathy felt it would be good for the Board of Commissioners to see the presentation. He asked that the Board please understand he was not here to ask for money as he normally does—only support, because he feels it will be beneficial for the Board to be supportive of this effort since it has the capacity to be able to lessen their burden. He did point out that he might ask them at a later time to help with the facility.

Dr. Wilson proceeded to give facts and figures that he felt would help to sell the fund raising effort. The quick facts were:

- MTCC experienced a 54.8% increase in FTE enrollment from 2007/08 to 2009/10
- McDowell County’s unemployment rate is 11.2%
- Each year, close to 31% of the adult population in McDowell County benefits from MTCC programs and facilities which ranks 1st out of 58 colleges
- 96% of 2011-12 MTCC Early College students were proficient on State end-of-course tests, compared to 79% of all North Carolina high school students
- In 2009-2010 MTCC was designated an Exceptional Performance Institution by the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges

Dr. Wilson proceeded to address future growth areas including expansion of Early College and of career and college promise opportunities for High School students, accommodation of baccalaureate degrees through colleges/universities, new/expanded technical and curriculum programs, and expansion of healthcare programs. With respect to needs, he advised additional space is needed on the main campus to allow for

expansion of Early College, for accommodation of baccalaureate degrees and advanced degree options through colleges/universities, to allow for expansion of healthcare programs and other technical program areas, for cafeteria expansion and space dedicated for a student activity center, and for faculty/staff offices and storage space.

Continuing, Dr. Wilson spoke about the opportunities the College and its students would experience with an advanced manufacturing and training center at the Universal Furniture Plant Facility as they offer machining, welding, electronics/electrical systems, industrial systems, customized industrial training, air conditioning, heating & refrigeration technology.

Another dilemma on the McDowell Tech campus that Dr. Wilson addressed was a licensing issue with the Cosmetology Board. The Cosmetology Program has existed since the beginning of the College. He pointed out they have some square footage issues but they do not have adequate space to provide for separate classrooms and training areas for beginning versus advanced students required by cosmetic arts boards. So the Board of Trustees Buildings and Grounds Committee is looking into getting bids and looking at the issue of trying to utilize part of the Baldwin Avenue property to relocate the Cosmetology/Esthetics Program, primarily because it is a better location. The main problem with cosmetology right now is inadequate parking for the patrons, most of whom are elderly and they are not coming. This is hurting the number of educational opportunities and practice sets they have available for the students. Dr. Wilson advised they are exploring the possibility of building a facility down on the lower parking lot where there is adequate space to build an approximate 6,000 square foot facility.

Dr. Wilson advised there will be 22,000 to 25,000 sq. ft. of vacated space at the main campus from programs relocated to the Universal Building and 4,000 to 5,000 sq. ft. of vacated space from Cosmetology/Esthetics relocated to Baldwin Avenue. This will begin resolving some, but not all, campus space issues.

Concerning campaign funding objectives, Dr. Wilson advised construction/renovation costs total \$4,000,000 - \$5,000,000; funds committed from Golden Leaf Foundation are \$2,140,000; and funds (to be) requested from US Economic Development Administration are \$750,000. This leaves a potential funding gap of \$1.1 - \$2.1 million.

Providing the Foundation Board chooses to move forward with the funding campaign in March, they will begin the in-house phase for raising money and make their case for the Board of Trustees, employees, and others. The lead gifts phase will be spring 2013, business gift phase summer 2013, and major gifts phase and community gifts phase fall of 2013.

Dr. Wilson said they were getting ready to launch a pre-employment initiative with the College and Isothermal Planning and Development on Friday. Mr. Abernathy and some of the MEDA Board members will be participating and he invited any or all of the Commissioners to participate as well. They will be offering a series of pre-employment training sessions, with a listing of companies looking for people. They are

asking them to give preference for interviewing folks that don't participate and complete the short-term pre-employment training and to try to encourage people to go on for more advanced training. About 20 companies have agreed to come for this event which is part of the Golden Leaf grant. Dr. Wilson stressed the importance of these sessions, noting they could not wait until the Universal facility is completed.

In a brief discussion, Dr. Wilson pointed out the last fund raising efforts in the community were YMCA and Hospice, both of which raised about \$1.5 million. Chairman Walker pointed out the benefit of having representatives from both industry and business on the Universal Committee and expressed his appreciation for what is happening.

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion to have staff draft letters of support for the upcoming McDowell Technical Community College Foundation Fund Drive. Chairman Walker seconded the motion and by unanimous approval, the motion carried.

MIDDLE SCHOOL UPDATE

The County Manager advised what is involved here is support for the School Board with a project that will renovate both East and West Junior High Schools and do substantial additions to the High School. The Board of Commissioners had approved and supported the issuance of \$8.5 million worth of debt in order to facilitate those funds that we already have on hand and there are still remnants from the "pay as you go" school building plan. We have accumulated funds and, in this case, they would need to be supplemented by the issuance of debt and this requires approval of the State of North Carolina through the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Abernathy advised a Public Hearing is scheduled on February 28th and a quorum is desperately needed here on this date. Also, there are a number of schedules including bank bids which are out, construction bids which the School Board has opened and issued a contingent approval to be in construction, and the meeting of the Local Government Commission which is the approval of the issuance of debt, and that is month a month. The low bid is in the amount of \$9,160,500.00 was approved by the School Board the previous week as a contingent approval, contingent on the Board of Commissioners approving the continuation of the process and approval by the LGC.

Mr. Abernathy then reviewed information from the Schools after the agenda went out, with revenue estimates through the remainder of the current fiscal year which had not yet been done. The current balance including debt is \$5,330,084.71. He pointed out we will generate \$800,000, primarily from earmarked sales tax funds, unless something goes terribly wrong. Mr. Abernathy said the reason estimated revenue was included was because two numbers were not accurately shown on the previous figures. One was the McDowell High School roof, shown at \$270,000. The accurate number is \$500,000 that had already been obligated. The other number that went up (about \$70-\$80,000) was what the School System has labeled "Other MHS related", which includes a number of items. Mr. Abernathy advised this number needs to be carefully viewed because it is a

number “in process” (involving roads, parking, etc.). The bottom line is we are proposing to borrow \$8.5 Million, and no county dollars are going into this.

UNIVERSAL UPDATE

The County Manager provided a general update. The Universal Committee had met the previous week and the meeting was very positive. The Committee will not meet again for two months, but the two sub-committees will meet. The contractor is working on the bid documents, the Board of Commissioners has approved the design, and real progress is being made. The architect’s presentation gives a first look at what the renovation of the 50,000 square feet might cost. Mr. Abernathy pointed out it looks to be around a \$3 million project just on the renovation. The architect is comfortable that if the project were to go to bid now, the figure would be well under this, and the number includes a \$150,000 contingency. The number does not include the renovation of 22,000 sq. ft. of vacated space, fire protection/upgrades, parking lot drainage, curb, sidewalks, landscaping, guardhouse, and fencing, much of which has not yet been defined.

Mr. Abernathy made reference to the funds in hand from the Golden Leaf Foundation that applies to the renovation of the 50,000 sq. ft. He said he felt some of the funds should go toward renovations at the main campus because that is what had been agreed upon, both in the grant and otherwise, but this still has to be figured out. Also, Mr. Abernathy said he had been told the County would receive a \$100,000 ARC grant in federal funds, although official word has not yet been received on this.

EDA GRANT UPDATE

Mr. Abernathy advised the County was invited to submit additional information to the Economic Development Administration to be in line for consideration of EDA funding in the amount of \$750,000 under the Public Works Program. He said the information is obviously being compiled and would be handled with an application being submitted.

A brief discussion followed.

LAKE JAMES PERMITTING UPDATE

With reference to discussion during the last meeting on the reclassification process, Mr. Abernathy advised the environmental assessment for a water filtration plant is being done. This necessitates a reclassification of Lake James from a WS-5 to a WS-4. The Board has agreed to this, having done so years ago. He made reference to the resolution from the last meeting that was executed and sent to the State and the draft of a letter to Burke County (a similar letter will be sent to the City of Marion) asking them to adopt a similar resolution since part of the watershed is in their jurisdictions. Third, he had met with the State and the parks people and there is a map that is being drafted that

will show exactly where the intake and the structures will be located. He noted some progress is being made.

TAX MATTERS

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

Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$1,880.12
Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$4,342.02
Motor Vehicle Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$1,808.02
Motor Vehicle Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$964.66
Release Refunds	Refunded amount of \$1,031.64

Commissioner Lavender made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hollifield, to approve tax releases and refunds as presented.

In discussion, Commissioner Lavender said he would like more information from the Tax Appraiser on some of the items for which a release or refund is requested. For instance, he asked whether staff is going the extra step to verify that the person is being truthful in what he reports. Other members of the Board agreed.

By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Library Director Elizabeth House had sent notification to the Clerk that Debbie R. Davis had resigned from the Library Board. Ms. Davis had served an at-large position on the Library Board; therefore her replacement could come from any location of the County. Miss House had requested that the Board appoint Louise Griffin of North Cove to fill the vacant slot on the Library Board.

The vacancy was presented on first reading.

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Lavender, to approve the appointment of Louise Griffin to the Library Board as requested on first reading. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

CITIZEN COMMENT

Two people had signed up to speak during this time. First was Christopher Roth.

He made reference to an article that he saw in the newspaper back in December and a particular quote made by Chairman Walker concerning people filing complaints which had caused him some concern. As a result, he had written a letter to the editor and an email to Chairman Walker. He said the County Manager responded soon afterward but he had not heard from Chairman Walker about the situation. He questioned why this was the case. Chairman Walker explained that generally during citizen comment, the Board does not respond, and he apologized saying he did not feel it was necessary for both he and Mr. Abernathy to respond in the case he had referenced. However, he agreed to answer any questions or concerns Mr. Roth might have and invited Mr. Roth to call him any time.

Further, Mr. Roth commented on Dr. Wilson's presentation, complementing the administration and staff on the level of educational opportunities at McDowell Tech.

Next was Mr. Rodney Franklin, Pastor of Missions Flame. He advised they have outgrown their facility and were looking at the possibility of leasing the Senior Center. Mr. Franklin said this would benefit them and would benefit the County in leasing the space.

During a brief discussion, the County Manager said he would need to check some things out first.

ADJOURN TO PLANNING WORKSHOP

There being no further business to transact at this time, Commissioner Lavender made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hollifield, to adjourn to Wednesday, February 27th, at 11:30 a.m. for a Planning Workshop with department heads. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

DAVID N. WALKER, CHAIRMAN

CARRIE PADGETT
CLERK TO THE BOARD