STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – NOVEMBER 10, 2014

ASSEMBLY

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, December 1, 2014, at 5:00 p.m., at the Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center, Marion, North Carolina.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Van Randy Hollifield, Chairman; Joseph R. Kaylor, Vice-Chairman; Michael K. Lavender; Barry E. McPeters; and David N. Walker.

OTHERS PRESENT

Charles R. Abernathy, County Manager; D. Fred Coats, County Attorney; Ashley R. Wooten, Deputy Clerk to the Board; and Theresa Strickland, Public Information Technician (Filming).

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hollifield called the meeting to order. The invocation was given by Commissioner McPeters, followed by the pledge of allegiance, led by Major Bob Smith (Ret.).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Walker made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the October 13, 2014 Regular Session as presented. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Lavender made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of a closed session for economic development purposes. The motion failed due to lack of a second.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Walker, to approve the agenda as presented. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

BUDGET UPDATE AND FINANCE MATTERS

The County Manager presented an update on the county's expenditures and revenues through this point in the fiscal year. He pointed out the sales tax report for the month of July

14 stating that the results have been positive so far. He also noted that the tax collection report will be adjusted in subsequent months to reflect the shifting of the motor vehicle tax to NC DMV. He stated that collection through the tag office had been positive.

FEE WAIVER REQUEST

The County Manager presented a fee waiver request brought forward by the Public Works Department. He advised that a group of residents in the Nebo area had purchased a lot with a dilapidated mobile home and several hundred tires. They are specifically requesting the waiver of tipping fees for these items.

Commissioner Lavender motioned, with a second by Commissioner Walker, to approve the waiver of tipping fees for this project. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

OFFER TO PURCHASE WILD RIDGES LOT

Mr. Abernathy advised that the county had foreclosed on several lots in the Wild Ridges subdivision in prior years. He noted that an adjacent property owner had made an offer of $4,072.56 to purchase one of the county-owned lots.

Commissioner Kaylor motioned, with a second by Commissioner Walker, to accept the bid of $4,072.56 and begin the upset bid process. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

DONATION OF SURPLUS AMBULANCE

The County Manager noted that the school system has requested to receive a surplus 2006 ambulance for the new emergency medical program at McDowell High School.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner Kaylor, to approve the donation of the 2006 ambulance to the McDowell County School System. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

SCHOOL SYSTEM PROPERTY DISPOSAL MATTER

Mr. Abernathy informed the Board that the School System would like to dispose of a very small piece of property between East McDowell Middle School and First Free Will Baptist Church. He noted that by statute the school system must offer the Board of Commissioners the opportunity to acquire any surplus real property before it is offered to the public. He also noted that the property would be of no use to the county.

Mr. Mark Garrett of the McDowell School System provided a brief overview of the property and its location.

Commissioner Kaylor motioned, with a second by Commissioner Lavender, to approve the request by the School System. By unanimous approval, the motioned carried.

OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSAL SKILL CENTER

Dr. Bryan Wilson presented an overview of the development of the Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center. He stated that he could already tell that the center has had an impact on the industries in the county. He also noted that the college has already begun the process of expanding the types of training that are offered through their programs.

Dr. Wilson also stated that USDA Rural Development had approved funding to renovate vacated space on the existing campus. He said he felt that the next step is to increase the marketing for the programs and the facility. He introduced Eddie Shuford and noted that Mr. Shuford would be the college's key contact at the facility.

Dr. Wilson stated that several groups have reserved the conference room already and there has been interest from other groups. In closing, he praised the Board of Commissioners for their vision in securing the property, the Golden Leaf grant, and renovating the building.

In response to a question from Chairman Hollifield, Dr. Wilson stated that the Universal Center was unique in the community college system.

Commissioner Walker expressed his excitement for the facility and the enthusiasm the college and local industries have shown towards the project.

Commissioner McPeters stated he was proud of the project and excited that the vision has come to fruition.

Chairman Hollifield stated that he was extremely satisfied with the work done by the contractor England Builders.

Commissioner Lavender asked Dr. Wilson several questions regarding the possibility of a four-year program being established at the Center. Dr. Wilson stated that the college is still working to make the case that there would be enough of a demand for the program to be based in McDowell County. Mr. Lavender expressed a concern that the amount of money in the new Golden Leaf grant request was insufficient for purchasing equipment. Dr. Wilson stated they felt that other funders would be able to help purchase the equipment that may be needed if a four-year program was established at the facility.

Mr. Shuford noted several employers in the county have begun hiring due to the anticipated growth in the number of skilled employees.

DISCUSSION OF CONVENIENCE CENTER SITE

The County Manager presented a brief overview of the history of the Crooked Creek Convenience Center. He noted that there had an effort in prior years to locate a site in the area to purchase.

He advised the Board that the property owners where the current site is located had offered to sell a portion of their property to the county. The site that that would be purchase would allow for the site to be more fully developed in accordance with standards similar to other sites.

Public Works Director Mike Gladden noted that although the site is the smallest, it receives as much solid waste as some of the larger sites. He said he had heard from several folks that they avoid the site due to the small size and perceived danger.

Commissioners Walker and Kaylor said they thought the price of $20,000 was fair. Chairman Hollifield said he had received several calls regarding the lack of convenience of the site.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner Lavender, to purchase the site for $20,000 plus all purchase-related costs. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

UPDATE ON VETERAN RELATED MATTERS

Chairman Hollifield said he felt it would be appropriate to have an update from several individuals that serve veterans in the community due to the upcoming Veterans Day holiday.

Bob Smith addressed the Board regarding the number of veterans located in McDowell County. He said he believed that there were over 3,700 veterans located in the county. He noted that many of the veterans are suffering from numerous medical conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He also noted that the impact of a deployment can be felt by the families of service members, their employers, and others. He provided information on several programs and efforts from community groups that working to help the lives of veterans.

Mr. Smith also provided a history of the veterans monument that was constructed several years ago near the senior center. He also noted that the organization is still accepting $100 donations for bricks at the monument. He stated the funds are used to maintain the monument as well as support veterans and families in various needs.

Commissioner Walker praised the veterans organizations for their support of veterans in the community.

Mr. Smith presented Kim Ledbetter of McDowell Tech with a symbolic check for $1,000 for a veteran or the family member of a veteran who attends McDowell Tech.

Alan Mainer presented an overview of the activities of the American Legion program and their recent activities. He provided a summary of the types of programs that his organization provides for the veterans in McDowell County and throughout the United States.

One highlight of the local post is the transportation program that provides necessary transport for veterans to medical appointments.

Mr. Mainer also requested from the board and the public any information on a possible home for the American Legion post. He stated that they currently meet in a church, but would prefer to have a permanent home.

The County's Veterans Services Officer Doug Gouge provided an overview his activities in the office over the last year. He said he has learned quite a bit about the numerous services that the Veterans Administration offers.

Mr. Gouge requested that the Board petition the state regarding some of the recent changes that have taken at that level in regards to service delivery. He said he felt that many of the older veterans are less comfortable sharing information with someone remote via phone versus a one on one conversation.

He reviewed several facts and figures in relation to expenditures by the Veterans Administration in McDowell County. He thanked the Board and staff for the opportunity to serve the veterans in his position.

A brief discussion of the disabled veteran tax benefit followed.

UPDATE ON FOOTHILLS PILOT PLANT

The County Manager presented an update on the discussion regarding the transfer of the Pilot Plant project to the non-profit entity ISAMPA. Several of the points highlighted by the County Manager included a full transfer of the building, land, and equipment to the non-profit with the understanding that the property would revert to the county in the event of a default of the operation. The organization could not sell the property or have a lien placed on it. The County Attorney advised cutting all ties to the organization in order to remove the county from liability as much as possible. He clarified that the transfer would be a full property transfer and not a lease.

After a general discussion of the pros and cons of leasing or transferring the property, Commissioner Kaylor suggested postponing any decision until the new board could consider it at the December meeting.

UPDATE ON PARTF TRAIL GRANT/UPDATE

The County Manager presented a brief overview of the PARTF application status. He noted that county staff and the grant writer had met and are currently preparing a new grant application.

He noted that the grant writer suggested that the grant request be lowered in order to make the application more appealing. Mr. Abernathy mentioned that several items remain unresolved regarding the future path of the trail.

Mr. Wooten provided an update on the proposed public input session.

Commissioner Lavender motioned, with a second by Commissioner Walker, to set a public input session at the McDowell Senior Center November 20 at 4 and 6 pm to receive comments on the proposed trail projects. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

UPDATE ON GOLDEN LEAF GRANT

The County Manager presented the Board with the grant proposal that county staff had written concerning the Golden Leaf grant for the grading of sites on the Universal property as well as perhaps purchasing equipment for the four-year program.

Commissioner Lavender expressed some concerns about the amount of funds that would be dedicated to the equipment purchase for the Universal center. Commissioner Walker stated that he felt from Dr. Wilson's presentation earlier in the meeting that the equipment would be taken care of by existing industries and other grants.

UPDATE ON JAIL CONSTRUCTION BIDS

Mr. Abernathy noted that bids were out for the courthouse and jail renovation project. The bids are to be opened on November 20 for both projects. He stated that county staff are hoping to have the financing approved by the Local Government Commission at their January meeting. The bids would be approved at the December 1, 2014 meeting.

WATER SYSTEM UPDATE

The County Manager noted that NC Department of Commerce had awarded a $100,000 grant for the I-40 Interchange Water Project with $300,000 from ARC still pending.

He also noted that the reclassification process is still underway. Scheduling a public workshop has taken much more time than he anticipated. The first step, he stated, would be for the Environmental Management Commission to approve the process starting in January, with the earliest an approval could come in June or July.

MCDOWELL HOUSE WING DEMOLITION UPDATE

Mr. Abernathy provided an update on the status of the McDowell House restoration project. He noted that bids were extremely high; therefore, the Board had authorized county staff to proceed

Commissioner Walker motioned with a second by Commissioner McPeters to authorize Baker Grading to remove the wings from the McDowell House. Commissioner Lavender did recommend that the contractor have liability insurance to cover any possible issues. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

TAX MATTERS

The County Manager presented the monthly tax releases, rebills, and refunds.

A summary of the tax matters:

MV Releases Under $100.00	Released amount of $297.30
Releases Under $100.00	Released amount of $ $188.99
Releases Over $100.00	Released amount of $ 3,576.66
Release Refunds	Refunded amount of $1,112.53

The NCVTS Pending Refund report showed a refund total of $1,578.47.

Commissioner Lavender motioned, with a second by Commissioner Walker, to approve the releases, rebills, and refunds. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Wooten presented the Board Appointments for November. He noted there are currently a full member and two alternate vacancies on the Planning Board. He advised that there has been one applicant for the position, Chris Allison from Old Fort.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner Lavender, to appoint Chris Allison the Planning Board as a full member.

CITIZEN COMMENT

No one from the public requested to speak.

REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Hollifield noted that this would be the last meeting for Commissioners Lavender and Kaylor.

Commissioner Kaylor expressed his appreciation for being able to serve and for the things he was able to accomplish in such a short time. He especially noted the Tooth Bus program as one of his big accomplishments.

Commissioner Walker thanked Commissioners Lavender and Kaylor for their service and acknowledged that they didn't always agree, but in the end of the day they had the best interests of the people of McDowell County.

Chairman Hollifield stated that the learned much from both gentlemen.

Commissioner McPeters echoed Mr. Walker's comments that there may be disagreements at time, but they could still remain friends in the end.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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VAN RANDY HOLLIFIEILD
CHAIRMAN

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ASHLEY R. WOOTEN
DEPUTY CLERK TO THE BOARD