

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – JULY 20, 2020**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, July 20, 2020, at 11:30a.m., at the Universal Conference Room.

Members Present

David N. Walker, Chair; Tony Brown, Vice-Chair; Lynn Greene; Brenda Vaughn; and Barry McPeters-via phone

Members Absent

None

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board; Attorney Fred Coats; Ronald Harmon, Deputy County Manager for Community Development

Call to Order

Chairman Walker called the meeting to order at 11:30am.

Approval of Agenda

Vice Chairman Brown made a motion to approve the agenda, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

YMCA Funding Request

Tony Bramblett, YMCA Director, gave a presentation on YMCA programs and activities. The YMCA Impact & Program Overview material is with the agenda packet.

Mr. Bramblett presented a onetime request for \$10,000 investment back into the 17 year old YMCA program due to COVID-19 related issues. He will also be asking 14 other investors for \$10,000 each to go toward the \$150,000 loss of revenue. The monies would go toward the Afterschool Program. The YMCA is state licensed to run the Afterschool Program, and the county school system allows the space at each of their eight elementary schools. The YMCA has been doing the fee based childcare program for four years. The county is allowed a 50% scholarship for each participant in the Afterschool Program. Also, emergency service providers were offered free child care when the YMCA reopened on March 18th.

Commissioner Greene noted it was hard to help one private entity without helping other private entities due to loss of revenue from the current pandemic. Mr. Bramblett noted that public private partnerships are a benefit to the county.

Chairman Walker added the YMCA is great, but the county wasn't able to give their employees a raise this year and suggested he seek funding from the school board.

Mr. Bramblett noted the center had experienced a 35% loss in membership since the center has been closed. He added this center had a lot of overhead, and was an upside down facility. The Afterschool Program is in every elementary school in the county and services working families' children.

Commissioner McPeters stated he knew the City of Marion had given \$10,000, he asked if 100% of the investment would stay in the county. Mr. Bramblett said yes, it stays in the county and will not go to the district.

Vice Chairman Brown noted \$10,000 funds requested are for childcare funding only—it will help the working person who has also been hit hard during this virus. He felt the county should help, and Mr. Bramblett also go to the school board and ask for \$5k and the county match their donation. If the school board will not give the funds, the county will find \$5,000. Mr. Bramblett added the program serves approximately 200 children from 175 families in eight elementary schools.

Vice Chairman Brown made a motion to give \$5,000 and also challenge the school board to match the \$5,000, second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Banks Mobile Home Update

Mr. Wooten noted the property was an eye sore and a detriment to the community, and needs action from a government entity since the property owners were not taking steps to clean up the property.

Mr. Ronald Harmon, Planning Director reported staff had followed procedures as directed in Section 503.3 of the Abandoned Mobile Home Ordinance and all requirements had been met to move forward with demolition of the property.

County Attorney Fred Coats commented the County had followed what needed to be done and was ready to move on with the demolition.

Mr. Wooten noted that Gateway Wellness had expressed interest in the property for workforce housing, and potentially the county could recoup the cleanup expense in the sale of the property.

The bids received were from:

JC Property Professionals \$34,000

Bennick Enterprises \$74,000

Suttles Trucking and Grading, Inc \$83,460

Vice Chairman Brown made a motion to move forward and approve the bid of the demolition charge cost from JC Property Professionals at \$34,000, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Shooting Range Update

Mr. Wooten noted the bids approved at the Regular Session meeting included the alternates,

and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission approved only the Base Bid for construction and Alternate G-3 for a total contract price of \$1,969,130.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to approve the England Builder, Inc award bid of \$1,969,130, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a motion of 5-0 the motion passed.

Property Sale Update

Mr. Wooten noted the buyer had communicated last Friday he was wiring money to his attorney for the purchase of the property. As of this date the monies have not been received. The buyer's attorney anticipates funds will be available later this week.

COVID-19 UPDate

Mr. Kehler, ES Director gave the following report:

- ES continues supporting public health with testing; at the last testing site staff tested over 230 people in two hours in PPE with extreme heat conditions
- EOC is on day 127 and he noted the incident is growing as more people are being tested
- staff members are being stretched with dealing with the pandemic and routine calls; especially since there was a drowning at Lake James and recovery efforts are ongoing for the swimmer
- PPE supply chain is becoming strained—gowns and gloves are harder to source
- the long term care facility outbreak at Deer Park has required round the clock coordination needs; 5 staff and 16 residents have tested positive as of this date; doing all they can to mitigate the situation
- 6.2% positivity rate—showing a steady increase

Ms. Karen Powell, Health Director gave the following update:

- 6,166 tested; 5,320 negative; 349 positive; 497 test pending; 3 deaths
- Continuing to monitor the situation at the Courthouse; DSS; Deer Park; and today added Autumn Care and a daycare that is being watched.
- ES and the Health Department are working closely together notifying positives and contact tracing---encouraging public to stay at home if you feel sick, wear a mask and wash hands
- Clerk of Court tested negative and were able to reopen the Courthouse; masks required at the courthouse
- DSS has three employees that tested positive; her recommendation to minimize the transmission was to telework---social distancing is easier at the courthouse than DSS

County Attorney Fred Coats expressed his concern about the delay in notification to the public of the courthouse closing. He noted Rutherford County was notified at 4:00pm on Thursday. Mr. Kehler noted the issue had been addressed and a protocol had been established on notifications should a similar event arise in the future.

Chairman Walker left the meeting at 12:39pm.

Commissioner McPeters expressed his concern over large box stores having known positive cases go into their businesses, and county buildings have one positive and the entire department is shut down.

Ms. Powell noted a lot of situations would have been avoided with employees wearing a mask at work. Mr. Wooten also noted he thought the county needed a mandated policy for employees to wear a mask since there were inconsistencies across departments with wearing a mask.

Consensus of the Board was for Mr. Wooten to write up a mask mandate for all county employees.

Vice Chairman Brown called for a five minute recess at 12:51pm.

Vice Chairman Brown declared the Board back in session at 12:56pm.

DSS Update

Ms. Sprouse gave an update and distributed the agency reports. A copy is with the agenda materials. She noted the department had started teleworking since last Wednesday, due to a couple of employees testing positive in two DSS locations. In addition ten employees within the agency were showing COVID symptoms. The wearing of masks had been mandated and safety precautions have been put in place.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to go into Closed Session at 1:09pm to discuss an employee matter per NCGS 143-318.11(6), second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 3-0 the motion passed.

Vice Chairman Brown declared the Board back in open session at 1:29pm. No action was taken.

Adjournment

Commissioner Vaughn made a motion to adjourn at 1:29pm, second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 3-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

Cheryl L. Mitchell
Clerk to the Board

Tony G. Brown
Vice Chairman