

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION –DECEMBER 13, 2021**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, December 13, 2021, at 5:00p.m., at the Universal Conference Room.

**Members Present**

Tony Brown, Chairman; David N. Walker, Vice-Chair; Brenda Vaughn; Chris Allison; Patrick Ellis

**Members Absent**

None

**Others Present**

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board

**Call to Order**

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 5:00pm. The invocation was given by Vice Chairman Walker. The pledge of allegiance was given by Commissioner Allison.

**Approval of Minutes**

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the November 8, 2021 Regular Session minutes, November 15, 2021 Regular Session minutes, and November 8, 2021 Closed Session minutes; second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

**Approval of Agenda**

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

Mayor Steve Little of the City of Marion recently published a calendar containing photographs of flowers in McDowell County. Included was the state flower, the Carolina Lily. He presented each Board member, as well as the County Manager and Clerk with the calendar.

The Board had their pictures made with Mayor Little after the presentation.

**Recognition of Employees**

Mr. Wooten introduced the following employees for their 20 and 25 years of service to the Board for recognition:

20 Years: Karen Morgan, Finance; Mitch Davenport, Facility Maintenance; Deanna McKinney, Sheriff; Kathy Saulmon, Sheriff; Heath Helms, Sheriff; Vicky Styles, DSS; Nancy Bruner, EM Communications; Cheryl Mitchell, Board of Commissioners

25 Years: Kimberly Welborn, Elections; Terry DePoyster, Public Services; Robert Greene, Sheriff; David Marler, Sheriff

### **Selection of Chair and Vice-Chair**

Chairman Brown noted the first item of business required by NCGS 153A-39 was the selection of a Chair and Vice-Chair. Chairman Brown turned the meeting over to the Clerk for this purpose.

Ms. Mitchell asked for nominations for Chair. Commissioner Walker nominated Commissioner Brown, second by Commissioner Vaughn. There were no other nominations.

By a vote of 5-0 Commissioner Brown was elected Chairman.

The Clerk took nominations for Vice-Chair. Commissioner Allison nominated Commissioner Walker, second by Commissioner Vaughn. There were no other nominations.

By a vote of 5-0 Commissioner Walker was elected Vice Chairman.

### **COVID-19 Update**

Ms. Adrienne Jones, Emergency Services Deputy Director, gave the following update:

- 14-day positivity rate is 5.0%
- 32 cases since Friday
- There have been no COVID deaths reported since 11/23/2021
- No outbreaks in any of the long-term care facilities
- More strep and flu virus currently in the county
- Boosters recommended for 16 y/o and up

### **Parks and Recreation Update**

Mr. Chad Marsh, Director, reviewed a list of improvements that have been made at the Parks and Recreation Dept. A copy of the update is with the agenda materials, as well as a proposed system for the McDowell County Youth Baseball and Softball Leagues.

The proposal was to combine the two existing leagues and adopt the Little League system. There would be two age groups (11-16 years old) would play their games at Big League Camp; and (4-10 years old) would play at Maple Leaf, Lindley Field, and Hemphill Park. The new League would be comprised of nine divisions or age groups.

Kevin Price, Little League Board Chair, added the cost would remain at \$50 per player. The cost covers full uniform (hat, jersey, pants, belt), 12-game season and play-offs after the season. Any child who had a hardship with the participation fee, or who expressed interest in playing were allowed to play due to sponsorships.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the County merge and affiliation with Little League and bring a document back to next month's meeting outlining responsibilities, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

### **G5 Project Update**

Lisa Jennings, Natural Resource Specialist with US Forest Service, noted there has been \$2 million raised and 42 miles of trails to be built in Old Fort over the next five to ten years. This will be the first new trail system on the Pisgah National Forest. \$800,000 of the \$2 million will go toward access to the upper Catawba Falls.

Jason McDougald, Executive Director, Camp Grier, reviewed Phase 1 of the Old Fort Trails Project. There will be a groundbreaking ceremony on January 15<sup>th</sup>, and the anticipated completion of the first six miles by mid-summer.

Stephanie Swepson-Twitty, President of Eagle Market Streets Corporation, also discussed how the \$2 million in funds were secured.

Commissioner Ellis requested an update on the project every four to six months.

### **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**

Mr. Wooten gave an update on a couple of the ARPA funded projects:

Water System Expansion – McGill Associates had submitted a contract for the design of the water system expansion. A copy of the contract is with the agenda materials.

The U.S. Senate had passed a bill that would grant ARPA recipients additional expenditure flexibility. The bill is now pending in the U.S. House.

### **Building Projects Update**

The Administrative Offices at 69 N Main Street are on schedule to be fully complete in April. The upper level will be completed by mid-February.

The Emergency Services Headquarters is anticipated to be complete by late January or February.

The public shooting range is anticipated to be complete in March. The small office building is being framed up, and the shooting shelters are complete.

The Garden Street parking lot is 75% complete. The retaining walls and compaction will be done within the next several weeks.

A new gas canopy has been installed at the county gas pumps near the Law Enforcement Center.

Staff had met with Fred Blackly, landscape architect, to look at the Parks and Rec ballfields at Maple Leaf for adding a picnic shelter and playground. The state budget appropriated \$4.5 million for improvements to the Marion Recreation Center. Staff will bring back a finished product for approval when received.

Vice Chairman Walker recognized Rep. Dudley Greene, Speaker Tim Moore, and Sen. Ralph Hise who made sure funds were in the state budget for the improvements.

Mr. Wooten noted a survey had been done on the Old Fort Recreation pool and ballfields. Once the survey has been reviewed by County Attorney Coats and Mr. Wooten he will report back to the Board on the transfer of property.

**Stacy Hill Road Water Project Update**

Staff recommended McGill and Associates, P.A. to do the Nebo Water System Expansion Project. A copy of the agreement is with the agenda materials. The project should be completed in 45-60 days. This loop will connect to the line on US 70.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the contract as presented, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

**Fonta Flora State Trail Project Update**

Staff continues to work with the engineering firm McAdams to develop a scope of work and then a contract to bring for approval. The cost of the trail exceeds the available funding, so staff is looking at other funding options.

**Administrative Items**

The Board considered a request from the Clerk of Court's office for approval of the annual payment of \$500 to each Jury Commissioners.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the request, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten presented the following requests:

Two Nebo Water System fee waiver request from:

Ben Reynolds	\$39.62
Merle Hanna	\$30.41

EMS write-offs totaling \$32,763.96.

EMSMC requested a rate increase effective January 1, 2022. A copy of the increased fees is with the agenda materials.

Request for the audit presentation to be extended to the January Board meeting, due to issues outside of their control.

**Budget Amendments**

GF 14 – Appropriate reserved funds at the Library

GF 15 – Appropriates grant and reimbursement revenues and transfer between line items at the Sheriff's office

GF 16 – Appropriates program revenues and transfers between line items at Parks and Recreation

GF 17 – Appropriates program revenues at Social Services

911F2 – Transfers between line items for 911 Fund purchases

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve all items as presented, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

**Tax Matters**

MV tax refunds	\$ 754.50
Discoveries	\$18,921.81
Refunds	\$ 101.99
Releases under \$100	\$ 25.14
Write-off	\$ 255.24

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve all tax matters as presented, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

**2022 Meeting Schedule Approval**

The 2022 meeting schedule of the Board of Commissioners was presented for approval. A copy of the schedule is with the agenda materials and on the county website.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the meeting schedule for 2022 as presented, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

**Board Appointments**

The McDowell Mission Board of Directors requested a replacement for Vice Chairman Walker as his term had expired.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion was Commissioner Allison to serve on the McDowell Mission Board of Directors, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

The Foothills Regional Commission advised that Commissioner Vaughn’s term on the Transportation Advisory Committee of Foothills Rural Planning Organization was expired. Commissioner Vaughn was eligible for re-appointment.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion for Commissioner Vaughn to serve on the Transportation Advisory Committee, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion for all other appointments to board and committees stay the same, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

**Marion Fire Department Grant**

The Marion Fire Department requested approval to apply for a FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant for the purchase of turnout gear and wildland gear. The grant total would be \$140,180. The local

match and the grant writer's fee would be \$9,672 if the grant was awarded. The county fire tax share would be \$4,836.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the grant submission, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

**Citizen Comment**

Chairman Brown opened the floor for citizen comments at 6:27pm.

Roxanne Wetzel thanked the Board for passing the Heartbeat Bill Resolution.

Marilyn Foreman spoke on the cat over population in the county.

Vice Chairman Walker requested an update of the Animal Services department at the next month's meeting.

Citizen comment ended at 6:36pm.

**Commissioners/Staff Greetings**

Each Commissioner gave Christmas greetings after Commissioner Allison read from the Gospel of Luke.

Mr. Wooten noted the county offices would be closed Thursday and Friday December 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> and Monday 27<sup>th</sup>. They would also be closed on Friday, December 31<sup>st</sup> for Christmas and New Year's holidays.

**Closed Session**

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to go into Closed Session per NCGS 143-318.11(a)(4) (6) to discuss economic development and a personnel matter at 6:47 pm, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

No action was taken in the Closed Session.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to go out of Closed Session at 7:25pm, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Commissioner Allison made a motion for staff to submit a press release regarding county projects, departments, events and updates once a week, second by Vice Chairman Walker. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

**Adjourn**

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to adjourn at 7:26pm, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

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Cheryl L. Mitchell  
Clerk to the Board

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Tony G. Brown  
Chairman