

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – FEBRUARY 8, 2021**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, February 8, 2021, at 5:00 p.m., at the Universal Conference Room, 634 College Drive, Marion, North Carolina.

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Tony Brown, Chair

Others Present

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

Call to Order

Vice Chairman Walker called the meeting to order. He read a statement from Chairman Brown regarding his absence. The invocation was given by Commissioner Allison, followed by the pledge of allegiance, led by Commissioner Ellis.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Vaughn made a motion, second by Commissioner Ellis, to approve the January 11, 2021 Regular Session, and January 25, 2021 Regular Session, and January 11, 2021 Closed Session minutes as presented. By a vote of 4-0, the motion carried.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Ellis made a motion, second by Commissioner Allison to approve the agenda. By a vote of 4-0, the motion carried.

COVID-19/Vaccine Update

Mr. William Kehler gave the following update:

- Day 330 at the EOC for COVID-19 under Level 1 Activation
- 37,817 tests conducted; 4,410 positives; 69 deaths; 14-day positivity rate is 17.9%
- The 7-day rolling average is the lowest since the first week in December
- The vaccination site has a 1,000-1,500 per day capability, and can handle up to 6,000 doses a week with no waiting in the drive through event
- The COVID-19 hotline wait time is less than 2 minutes
- Vaccine distribution cutting back to 400 doses per week

The Board voiced their appreciation to Emergency Services for getting the community vaccinated.

FY 2020 Audit Presentation

Ms. Serena Hinson, with Loudermilk Church & Co, LLP, noted the audit was a clean unmodified audit, and was also approved by the Local Government Commission (LGC). She reviewed several specific items of interest related to the various funds. She noted the fund balance had grown from 15.23% in 2019 to 18.64% in 2020. The LGC requires at least an 8% fund balance.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the audit as presented, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion approved.

Vice-Chairman Walker thanked Ms. Bell, Finance Director, for the job she always does with the county finances. Ms. Hinson commended Ms. Alison Bell and Mr. Wooten on the good work the staff is doing.

The firm also presented their contract for FY21 audit proposal for \$40,175.

Commissioner Allison made a motion to approve the contract, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Tourism Development Authority (TDA) Update

Carol Price, Executive Director, and Eric Woolridge, President of Destination by Design, gave an overview of the new branding/master plan initiative by the TDA. The purpose of the McDowell County Tourism Master Plan was to create a 15-year roadmap to ensure the MCTDA effectively stewards its capital infrastructure program through strategic decision-making and investments. Ms. Price noted the short-term rentals in the county were doing great, and the Occupancy tax figures had increased during the pandemic. Due to COVID the wayfinding signage project had been delayed.

Mr. Woolridge gave an overview of the Strategic planning process to rebrand the county and the message. A copy of the presentation is with the agenda materials. He noted the Bike Trail is a significant opportunity for the county and very unique to western NC.

G5 Trail Collective/USFS update was given by Jason McDougal. The trail plan started with 25 miles from USFS, and has now grown into 42 miles. The group is currently seeking grant funds and anticipating being shovel ready in October.

Vice Chairman Walker requested the Utility Committee to address the GF Trail Collective also. The G5 Trail presentation will also be presented to the TDA, the Marion City Council, and the Old Fort Aldermen.

Universal Property Development Grant Update

Previously the county had received \$600,000 in Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funds for building access roads to serve the south side of College Drive. The county engineer had determined the funding will probably not be sufficient to build the roads as designed. Staff communicated the need to the ARC and has requested additional funding.

The pre-application to the Golden Leaf Foundation for additional funding to extend one road further into the property and grade several building sites was received. The county has now been invited to submit a \$750,000 grant for that project. The MEDA staff have completed the application and requested approval from the Board to submit the grant application. There would be no required county funds match.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the grant application, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Public Shooting Range Update

The construction project continues. Architect Chuck Hamrick had presented a blueprint to NC Wildlife for their approval. A copy of the blueprint is with the agenda materials. RFPs will be going out within the next month.

N. Main Street Building Update

Mr. Hamrick had done a rough draft of the floorplan for the new office space. There would still be time for changes later. Request was to approve initiating architectural drawings.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve as presented, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Emergency Services Building Update

Station 4 Building is very close to completion, the furnishings and equipment will be installed soon. Plans are to be fully operational by next month.

Construction continues on the Headquarters.

FY 2022 Budget Schedule

A copy of the schedule is with the agenda materials. Mr. Wooten noted that most of the budget meetings with the department heads would be held virtually. He added there will be more of a focus this year on long term goals, and more capital planning from each department.

Commissioner Ellis added he would like to see a strategy plan for 5-10 years, and a capital improvement plan for 10 years.

Delinquent Tax Listing

Mr. Wooten presented on behalf of Linda Onufrey, Tax Collector, the listing of taxpayers who were delinquent and requested authorization to place notice of Unpaid Real Property Tax Liens in the McDowell News per NCGS 105-369(a). The total amount of 2020 county real property taxes due as of January 31, 2021 was \$1,729,674.21.

Ms. Onufrey requested the advertising listing be published Wednesday, March 17, 2021. The quote for the advertising was \$4,649.40.

Commissioner Allison made a motion to approve the advertising of the unpaid tax liens, set the publish date of March 17th, and authorize advertisement in the paper for the quote presented, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Administrative Items

Mr. Wooten presented the Water Supply Plan for the McDowell County-Nebo Water System and the *Resolution for Approving Local Water Supply Plan*. This is an annual requirement for the system.

RESOLUTION FOR APPROVING LOCAL WATER SUPPLY PLAN

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute 143-355 (l) requires that each unit of local government that provides public water service or that plans to provide public water service and each large community water system shall, either individually or together with other units of local government and large community water systems, prepare and submit a Local Water Supply Plan; and

WHEREAS, as required by the statute and in the interests of sound local planning, a Local Water Supply Plan for McDowell County - Nebo Water System, has been developed and submitted to the McDowell County Board of Commissioners for approval; and

WHEREAS, the McDowell County Board of Commissioners finds that the Local Water Supply Plan is in accordance with the provisions of North Carolina General Statute 143-355 and that it will provide appropriate guidance for the future management of water supplies for McDowell County – Nebo Water System as well as useful information to the Department of Environmental Quality for the development of a state water supply plan as required by statute;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of McDowell County – Nebo Water System that the Local Water Supply Plan entitled, Local Water Supply Plan for McDowell County #10-56-032 dated January 13, 2021, is hereby approved and shall be submitted to the Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Water Resources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the McDowell County Board of Commissioners intends that this plan shall be revised to reflect changes in relevant data and projections at least once every five years or as otherwise requested by the Department, in accordance with the statute and sound planning practice.

This the 8th day of February, 2021.

ATTEST:

Cheryl L. Mitchell, Clerk to the Board

David Walker, Vice Chairman

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the *Resolution for Approving Local Water Supply Plan*, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten noted the Finance Department had received five responses regarding financing the purchase of seven ProCare LifePak 15 Defibrillators for Emergency Medical Services. The five responses were:

BB&T (Truist Bank)	1.28%
First Citizens	1.55%
Park National	1.617%
First Bank	1.99%
LGFCU	2.75%

BB&T (Truist Bank) responded with the lowest rate of 1.28%, in the amount of \$206,222.31 for a term of four years (8) semi-annual payments in arrears beginning August 2021.

Resolution Approving Financing Terms

WHEREAS: The McDowell County, NC (“Borrower”) has previously determined to undertake a project for the financing of cardiac monitors (the “Project”), and the Finance Officer has now presented a proposal for the financing of such Project.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, as follows:

1. The Borrower hereby determines to finance the Project through Truist Bank (“Lender”) in accordance with the proposal dated February 2, 2021. The amount financed shall not exceed \$206,222.31, the annual interest rate (in the absence of default or change in tax status) shall not exceed 1.28%, and the financing term shall not exceed four (4) years from closing.
2. All financing contracts and all related documents for the closing of the financing (the “Financing Documents”) shall be consistent with the foregoing terms. All officers and employees of the Borrower are hereby authorized and directed to execute and deliver any Financing Documents, and to take all such further action as they may consider necessary or desirable, to carry out the financing of the Project as contemplated by the proposal and this resolution.
3. The Finance Officer is hereby authorized and directed to hold executed copies of the Financing Documents until the conditions for the delivery of the Financing Documents have been completed to such officer’s satisfaction. The Finance Officer is authorized to approve changes to any Financing Documents previously signed by Borrower officers or employees, provided that such changes shall not substantially alter the intent of such documents or certificates from the intent expressed in the forms executed by such officers. The Financing Department shall be in such final forms as the Finance Officer shall approve, with the Finance Officer’s release of any Financing Document for delivery constituting conclusive evidence of such officer’s final approval of the Document’s final form.
4. The Borrower shall not take or omit to take any action the taking or omission of which shall cause its interest payments on this financing to be includable in the gross income for federal income tax purposes of the registered owners of the interest payment obligations. The Borrower hereby designates its obligations to make principal and interest payments under the Financing Documents as “qualified tax-exempt obligations” for the purpose of Internal Revenue Code Section 265(b)(3).
5. The Borrower intends that the adoption of this resolution will be a declaration of the Borrower’s official intent to reimburse expenditures for the Project that are to be financed from the proceeds of the BB&T financing described above. The Borrower intends that funds that have been advanced, or that may be advanced, from the Borrower’s general fund or any other Borrower fund related to the Project, for project costs may be reimbursed from the financing proceeds.
6. All prior actions of Borrower officers in furtherance of the purposes of this resolution are hereby ratified, approved and confirmed. All other resolutions (or parts thereof) in conflict with this resolution are hereby repealed, to the extent of the conflict. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

Approved this 8th day of February, 2021

ATTEST:

Cheryl L Mitchell
Clerk to the Board

David Walker
Vice-Chairman

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve *Resolution Approving Financing Terms*, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion was approved.

Mr. Wooten presented two Nebo Water System leak waiver fees:

Dean Buff	\$218.19	Water leak
Trinity Hill Freewill Baptist Church	\$116.06	Water leak

Commissioner Vaughn made a motion to approve both requests, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0 the motion was passed.

Budget Amendments

GF-28 – transfers between line items for employee raises and health insurance estimated costs

GF-29 – Allocate grant revenue in the Board of Elections budget

GF-30 – Transfers between line items and appropriates grant funds in Emergency Services

GF-31 – Transfers funds between line items due to unemployment funding in Human Services

GF-32 – Transfers between line items and allocates program revenues in the Sheriff's Office

GF-33 – Transfers funds between line items in Tax Assessing.

GF-34 – Allocates grant funding in the Economic Development

GF-35 – Transfers between line items in the Trail program for the Friends of Fonta Flora State Trail

CP2 – Appropriates fund balance for additional rent for the radio tower on Grants Mountain

911F1 – Transfers between line items in the 911 Fund

SI1 – Allocates revenue sources in the Self Insurance Fund

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve all budget amendments as presented, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Tax Matters

MV tax refunds	\$ 369.04
Discoveries	\$ 523.53

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve all tax matters, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By unanimous vote of 4-0, the motion carried.

Board Appointment

The Region C Workforce Development Board had a vacancy due to Dr. John Gossett's resignation at MTCC. The Board requested Dr. Brian Merritt the new MTCC President to fill the vacancy.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to appoint Dr. Brian Merritt, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Duke Energy Easement

Duke Energy requested a power line easement on the county owned property known as the Old

Hendrix Farm. The new electric line would serve the property to the east. Duke agreed the line could be installed in the existing 60 foot right of way on the property.

Commissioner Allison made a motion to approve the easement, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Saddle and Bridle Club Lease

The Saddle and Bridle Club has leased for many years' county owned property on Hwy 226 South. The lease will expire this month, and the Club would like to renew. Per statue staff will advertise the lease terms in the paper and will bring this item back next month.

Commissioner Vaughn made a motion to approve advertising the lease renewal, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Citizen Comment

Vice Chairman Walker opened the floor for public comments at 6:09pm.

There were no comments.

Public comment ended at 6:09pm.

REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Wooten advised staff was testing having a Zoom option available next month for the public to view the meeting live.

Commissioner Vaughn announced there was a survey being conducted by the State regarding internet connectivity. She encouraged all the public to take the five-minute survey at NC Broadband.gov. Vice Chairman Walker requested this item be on the agenda at the next Utility Committee meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to transact at this time, upon motion by Commissioner Ellis, second by Commissioner Allison, the meeting was adjourned at 6:11pm.

Cheryl L. Mitchell
Clerk to the Board

David N. Walker
Vice Chairman