

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION –JANUARY 24, 2022**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, January 24, 2022, at 11:30a.m., at the Commissioner’s Board Room at 60 E Court Street.

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; Lisa Sprouse, DSS Director; Donna Wilson, Food and Nutrition Supervisor, Lake Silver, Management Asst.

Call to Order

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order.

DSS Update

Ms. Sprouse gave an update of Covid protocol in the DSS department. She expressed her appreciation to Anna Lee and Lake Silver for their assistance.

Donna Wilson, gave an update on the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP). There have been 443 clients served by applications received, and 455 clients that were 65 and older that had received last year, are on autopay for this year.

Chairman Brown praised Ms. Sprouse for the excellent job she and her staff does for the citizens.

Marion Fire Dept SAFER Grant

Presented a request to apply for a FEMA grant for staffing. Request was for six additional staff members. The grant would pay 100% for three years.

Currently the Marion Fire Dept has 12 full-time employees- three administrators and nine-line firefighters- three firefighters per the three shifts. The six new positions would allow for an additional two firefighters per shift. The six positions would have an annual financial impact of \$350,000 or \$175,000 each for the City and County.

The City requested authorization to submit the grant with the six positions in order to allow time to discuss what number of positions that might be acceptable to the County between now, and when the grant would be accepted.

Discussion was held on the growth of the base over the last ten years. In 2013, the tax rate was 6 cents, and generated \$340,000 for the Marion Area. In 2021, the tax rate was 9.33 cents, and generated \$660,000.

Discussion was held on allowing the taxpayers who live in the district the opportunity to vote on the fire tax rate.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the submission of the SAFER grant for six firemen on the condition there will be a vote in the district based on the revenue source, second by Commissioner Ellis. Discussion was held on if another district wants to also have paid firemen the decision to fund will be based on a vote by the fire district requesting the increase.

Vice Chairman Walker withdrew his motion following the discussion, due to the uncertainty of getting the district vote on the ballot. Staff will research the process of getting a fire district tax on the ballot.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the grant submission, and if awarded after the three-year period of 100% funding, the fourth year see how many employees can be funded at that current fire district rate, second by Commissioner Allison. Discussion was held on approving the application but not for committing to paying for the employees in the fourth year. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten recognized Lake Silver for his coordinating COVID response efforts regarding employee exposure.

Chairman Brown noted the Board had received a citizen request to require all who enter a county building to wear a mask due to the increase in COVID cases. Discussion followed.

Chairman Brown made a motion to post mask mandate signs at entrances to the county buildings until February 14th, second by Commissioner Vaughn.

By a vote of 2-3 the motion failed.

Brown; Vaughn – yes

Walker; Allison; Ellis – no

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to recess at 12:34pm to Monday, January 31, 2022 at 11:30 at the Commissioner's Board Room at 60 E Court Street, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

Cheryl L. Mitchell
Clerk to the Board

Tony G. Brown
Chairman