

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION –JUNE 20, 2022**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, June 20, 2022, at 11:30a.m., at the Commissioner’s Board Room located at 69 N Main St., Marion, NC.

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 11:30am

DSS Update

Ms. Lisa Sprouse, DSS Director, gave an update. She noted due to the excessive heat forecasted for this week, there would be DSS employees at the Senior Center taking applications from citizens requesting assistance in paying their electric and/or water bills.

Ms. Sprouse also reported the interior offices at DSS were being painted. The process is for five offices a week would be emptied, and the employees of each of those offices would be moved to the conference room. The next week five offices would be moved, painted and put back together each week until they are completed. The employees are very happy and appreciative.

Train Up a Child

Chad Marsh, Parks and Recreation Director, reported the National Districts in Little League softball would be held at the Maple Leaf fields. The County has hosted four of the seven district tournaments. This last w/e 2 of the 3 local teams, advanced to the finals.

Football signups are coming up and there will be a chance for youth to play flag football for those who were unable to play contact sports. The Punt, Pass, and Kick competition will be July 30th, currently there are 95 youth signed up.

Aikman Kazee, Rec Programs Admin Assistant, attended with Mr. Marsh.

Mr. Marsh presented a new training initiative for consideration called Train Up a Child. The training would be for youth ages 12-17 on gun safety teaching the NHRA safety principles;

1. ALWAYS keep the gun pointed in a safe direction;
ALWAYS keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot
ALWAYS keep the gun unloaded until ready to use
2. Teach participants how the safe handling of firearms can result in a lifetime of enjoyable recreational experiences.
3. To instruct participants to recognize that firearms are tools and not toys.

The event is free to participants and open to the first 22 children (12-17 years old) who sign up, and whose parent/guardian completes participation and waiver forms. The event will take place at the McDowell County Shooting Range, July 26th-August 9th on Tuesdays from 3-5pm, for a total of three days, two hours per day of instruction.

Local law enforcement has given their endorsement for the safety class. If more than 22 youth apply, he will offer more classes later in the year. Mr. Marsh and Mr. Garrett, School Superintendent, have also discussed adding this class to the school's Hunter Education safety classes.

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

LEAD for NC Year in Review

Maeva Hassani, LEAD Fellow, gave a report on her year of apprenticeship with the County. She thanked the Board for the opportunity she was given to learn about county government, and how every department works cooperatively with each other to keep the county running.

The Board thanked Ms. Hassani for her work during the last year, and her contribution to the County. Ms. Hassani will be attending NC Central Law School.

Housing Project Update

Mr. Wooten gave an update on the Workforce Housing Project at the College. A copy of the map is with the agenda materials. According to NCGS 160A-274 allows the County to deed to the City for the proposed housing project. The area marked in red would be deeded to the City at no cost, and then the City could deed the property to the Workforce Housing Project. Suggestion would be to add a reverter or an interlocal agreement if the project didn't happen the County would get the property back.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the transfer of the property to the City, have the County Attorney draft a memorandum of understanding with language to be included this would revert back to the County two years from the date of acceptance if there is no movement and the project doesn't happen, second by Commissioner Vaughn. Commissioner Ellis asked what was the total acreage. Mr. Wooten noted it was 12-14 acres, the property had not been surveyed. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Water/Sewer & Economic Development Projects

West Marion Elementary Area Water Study

WithersRavenel Civil & Environmental Engineering Firm can do a preliminary engineering report on extending water around the West Marion School area. The cost is estimated to not exceed \$49,900.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve as presented, second by Commissioner Allison. Commissioner Ellis ask if the school would assist with the cost due to the water situation at the school. Mr. Wooten noted it had not been discussed. Suggestion was to use ARPA funds for the project. Commissioner Ellis asked staff to reach out to the school and see if they could help with the funding. Vice Chairman Walker added the water line would loop around to the fire department also. By a motion of 5-0 the motion passed.

College Drive Sewer Project

Industrial Development Fund grant to fund sewer and water for the new road off of College Drive. The city's sewer line serving the Universal building is failing. Staff suggests replacing the City's line, which would solve the County's need for sewer on the new road as well as ensure reliable sewer service for the Universal Building. In exchange for this work, the City has preliminarily agreed to transfer ownership of 2.5 miles of water line on US 70 in Nebo to the County.

Vice Chairman Walker asked what the estimated value of 2.5 miles of water line would be. Mr. Wooten noted the cost was approximately \$750,000 per mile of line.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to accept what staff had presented on the water and sewer lines as presented, second by Vice Chairman Walker. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Old Industrial Park Water and Sewer

MEDA applied for and received a Golden Leaf Foundation grant in the amount of \$95,000 to help extend water and sewer to the Project Splice site. The local cost is \$37,400.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to accept the request from MEDA on putting in line, with the cost not to exceed \$37,400, second by Vice Chairman Walker. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Economic Dev Project

Chuck Abernathy, MEDA Director, requested the Shooting Range property be submitted to the Duke Site Readiness Program to determine if there is excess property that can be developed. Chairman Brown noted the property can be swampy in that area, and a longer shooting range area is planned for the future.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the Duke Site Readiness Project with input from NC Wildlife and Duke would pay for the study, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Legislative Endorsements

Jason McDougal requested a letter of endorsement for trail initiatives from the County.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to draft a letter of endorsement signed by either the County Manager or the Chairman, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

MTCC Board Appointment

The Board needed to clarify which seat the two appointees by the Commissioners would fill for the Board of Trustees at McDowell Technical Community College.

By written ballot the vote was 4-0 (Vaughn did not vote) for Commissioner Vaughn to fill the 4-year term seat, and Chad Marsh would fill the 2 years remaining term of Garrett's seat.

Budget Review/Approval

Mr. Wooten did make a change to the budget ordinance for the school system for one year to take the One to One funding of \$100,000 to be applied to current expenses line item. The change would allow more flexibility to the school system and they agreed with the change.

Non-Profit Changes:

- McDowell Mission is lowered to \$5,000
- Freedom Life increased to \$12,000
- Lake James Environmental Association \$1,000
- McDowell County Pregnancy Care Center \$6,500

Commissioner Allison made a motion to amend the budget by removing the \$5,000 from McDowell Mission and adding \$2,500 to Freedom Life and \$2,500 to the Pregnancy Center due to the organization taking a different direction than what he believed the County's priorities would be such as changing the focus of the organization away from McDowell County by changing Board structure to have seven members from McDowell County, and six from Burke County, removing several dedicated McDowell County residents in the process. In addition, the organization is allowing Burke County representatives to lead the by-law changes, which gives an impression that the focus of the organization is shifting away from serving the people of McDowell County.

Vice Chairman Walker second the motion. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Sheriff's Office Changes

Two positions (Major and Public Information Officer/Evidence Custodian) were added under Sheriff's Office Salary and Benefits expenditures with an offset of jail revenue on the revenue side. The added revenue equates to \$125,000.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the budget with the changes of the Sheriff's two positions and incorporate the change that was just made regarding the Mission, and the money going to Freedom Life and the Pregnancy Center, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Tax Rates

Staff presented a document showing the proposed tax rates for the General Fund as well as the service districts. The Board had previously voted on increases for several fire departments. Staff requested a lower rate for the Longtown district from 15 cents to 12 cents in order to be consistent with the rate the Burke County residents are charged for the benefit of that fire department.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the 2023 tax rates as presented, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Non-Profit Contract

Staff noted the School of Government has noted counties should contract with funded

nonprofits. A draft contract that laid out the statutory authorities and obligations for nonprofits to receive County funding was presented for approval. The agreement will be done annually, and each funded non-profit must sign the agreement to receive funding.

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

Recess

Mr. Wooten reminded the Board they would need to meet again on June 30, 2022 at 11:30am in their Board Room.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to recess at 12:34pm to June 30, 2022 at 11:30am, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

Cheryl L. Mitchell
Clerk to the Board

Tony G. Brown
Chairman