

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION –MARCH 21, 2022**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, March 21, 2022, at 11:30a.m., at the Commissioners Board Room at 69 N Main 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; Lake Silver, Management Asst.; Maeva Hussani, LEAD Fellow

Call to Order

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

Baxter Healthcare Tax Appeal

Ms. Shannon Lowery, Business Tax Listing, and Ms. Tammy Wylie, Tax Assessor, presented an appeal from Baxter Healthcare.

Via phone Brian Bradley, Baxter Healthcare, and Rachelle Eisenmann, Sr Tax Manager-Property Tax presented an appeal to the Board of Commissioners regarding the assessor's denial of the 2021 obsolescence claim filed by Baxter Healthcare Corp.

The assessor denied the claim due to the value of the equipment does not change in value due to COVID.

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

DSS Update

Ms. Sprouse announced March is Social Workers Awareness Month and April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. There will be more information next month on observing the Child Abuse Prevention. Also, reviewed the data report that had been emailed to the Board.

DSS Building Update

Ms. Sprouse noted she was happy with the new flooring, and painting in halls and bathrooms at the DSS office.

Mr. Wooten noted the greatest need for DSS is space, since the agency is spread out across three locations. RHA would like more space to expand at the Adult Services Building.

Patrick McCurry, architect with Holland and Hamrick looked at the existing main DSS building could assess the facility with best option to renovate or add onto the existing structure.

Staff had spoken to DHHS staff about renovating the facility, and noted for a 30-year loan you could expect to get half of the cost back.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to move forward and bring back recommendations to the Board, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Ms. Sprouse noted she was prepared to present her budget request to the County Manager and there would be an increase for foster care. She added there were 40+ foster families.

Chairman Brown expressed his appreciation for Ms. Sprouse and for being a good steward of the DSS funds, and had done an excellent job managing her department needs.

VAYA Update

Dustin Burluson, VAYA Community Relations Regional Director, gave a quarterly update from VAYA. A copy of the handout is with the agenda packet.

He noted the State was considering having one vendor across the state for foster care, and all LME/MCO have a concern the coverage will not be as good.

- Opinions of all DSS Directors -state would look at data driven information, whereas currently the Directors can report any complaints/suggestions
- Vendor has to have an organization with a CEO, asking the State to reconsider
- Committed to have a statewide work flow, so when a child in custody has to have medical care in another county there will be no issue

All of the concerns will be discussed in a future district board meeting.

Public Health Week Resolution

Mr. Wooten received the following from Karen Powell, Health Director, requesting the Board to adopt the following resolution:

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT of PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK 2022

WHEREAS, the Foothills Health public health workforce is a critical component of our emergency response to natural and man-made disasters and widespread disease outbreaks in our county, including COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, our county and state public health workers have been courageous, inventive and tireless in their work to protect our residents from the threats of the COVID-19 pandemic, while continuing to perform their other essential public health functions, often times at the risk of their own safety and health; and

WHEREAS, public health measures to control and eliminate infectious diseases, improve environmental sanitation, and promote healthy lifestyle practices that have been the greatest cause of improved health status and increased life expectancy for the residents of our County and all North Carolina's residents; and

WHEREAS, public health plays a critical role advancing health equity and preventing chronic diseases and injuries, resulting in improved productivity and decreased health care costs for all North Carolinians; and

WHEREAS the Foothills Board of Health is committed to a continued emphasis on prevention in public health, and to helping our county and all North Carolina reach a better state of health through actions outlined in the Healthy North Carolina 2030 objectives; and

WHEREAS, communities, local health departments, employers, hospitals and health care providers, individuals and families, insurers, county leaders and policy makers, faith-based communities, and schools and childcare facilities must work together to identify and develop innovative solutions to health problems facing the people of McDowell County; and

WHEREAS the Foothills Board of Health and McDowell County Commissioners encourages all residents to recognize that public health is working to ensure that all residents are protected from threats such as COVID-19, influenza, foodborne disease, injury, and chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma.

WHEREAS, April 4-10, 2022, has been designated as **NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK**.

NOW, THEREFORE, WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE FOOTHILLS BOARD OF HEALTH and McDOWELL COUNTY COMISSIONERS in regular session, do hereby UNANIMOUSLY PROCLAIM that April 4-10, 2022, shall be designated as "PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK" in McDowell County, and commend its observance to all county residents and convey our deepest gratitude to those public health professionals who serve our county every day.

Attest:

Cheryl L. Mitchell, Clerk to the Board

Tony G. Brown, Chairman

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

Budget Meeting Schedule

Mr. Wooten reported the Sheriff had requested a budget workshop with the Board. Commissioner Ellis suggested meeting at the April 18th meeting.

Staff noted there were four fire departments, PG, Ashford-North Cove, Sugar Hill-Montford Cove, and Hankins that were requesting a fire tax increase. Discussion was held on

having a fire district tax on the election ballot. Staff noted it could not be on the ballot, the decision had to be made by the Commissioners.

The suggested date for meeting with the fire departments was April 14, at 5:00.

Chairman Brown asked if staff knew the starting pay with benefits for a deputy and a paramedic. Commissioner Allison stated the starting pay was \$35,388 for a deputy, and his opinion was to keep the paramedic and deputy pay at the same level.

Staff noted both departments received overtime pay, although paramedics work a 24-hour shift, and deputies work a 12-hour shift.

Consensus of the Board was all agreed there needs to be an increase in salaries and it will be a process to get them where they need to be. Mr. Wooten noted he had not met with either Sheriff Buchanan or Mr. Kehler to discuss their budgets. Ms. Bell had met with both. He noted the budget requests he had received from other departments had asked for increase in salaries and additional staff.

Consensus of the Board was to make sure the incoming funds would address recurring debt, and favored a pay scale study when the revaluation figures are known.

Commissioner Ellis suggested making the General Fund a line item, so the fund could be increased.

Mr. Wooten noted that if the Board wanted to do a 5% increase for employee salaries, it would take \$1.5 million, and there were not enough funds to cover the increase.

Consensus from the Board was to schedule any budget meetings requested with them in May.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to adjourn at 1:07pm, 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