

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – November 14, 2022**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, November 14, 2022, at 5:00 p.m., in the Commissioner's Board Room, 69 N Main St., Marion, NC.

Members Present

David Walker, Vice-Chairman; Brenda Vaughn; Chris Allison; Patrick Ellis

Members Absent

Tony Brown, Chairman

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Victoria Craig, Clerk to the Board; Lake Silver, Management Assistant

Call to Order

Vice-Chairman Walker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. The invocation was given by Commissioner Allison. The pledge of allegiance was given by Commissioner Vaughn.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Vaughn made a motion to approve the October 10, 2022 Regular Session minutes; October 17, 2022 Regular Session minutes, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to add item G to Old Business and item F to New Business for school board and accept as presented

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the November 14, 2022 agenda, with the additions, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Recognition of Commissioner Vaughn

Commissioners each spoke about Commissioner Vaughn's service to McDowell County.

Little League Champions Recognition

Aikman Kazee, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director, introduced the coaches and players that recently won the Little League State Championship that went on to play in the regional tournament.

- Levi Boone
- Isaac Brendle
- Danny Brown
- Kaden Buchanan
- Dominic Cardenas
- Jacoby Dale
- Tanner Furr
- AJ Mackey
- Drue Rose
- Hayden Shelton
- Jayden Silver
- Zeb Street
- Reid Waugh

Manager: Jeff Brendle

Coaches: Dean Rose and James Furr

Adopt Schedule of Values

Property Revaluation Consultant Tim Cain was present for the adoption of the 2023 Revaluation Schedule of Values. The Schedule will govern the revaluation process.

Mr. Cain informed the Board that he is still looking into purchase prices in the County.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to adopt the 2023 Schedule of Values, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Old Fort's 150th Anniversary

Kim Effler and Cathy Moore were present to discuss plans for the 150th anniversary of Old Fort's founding, which will be celebrated in 2023.

Commissioner Ellis requested 30 days to discuss funding for "Old Fort 150" and make a vote for the amount next month.

Catawba Riverkeeper Basin Plan

Grant Buckner from the Catawba Riverkeeper gave an overview of the Catawba River basin plan. This document highlights several areas that can be addressed throughout the basin to improve water quality.

The plan includes "2,673 miles of streams in 6 counties including Alexander, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, and McDowell. Lake James, Lake Rhodhiss, Lake Hickory, and Lookout Shoals are all part of the Northern Basin."

Mr. Buckner highlighted the importance of keeping McDowell County water ways clean because of the location of the County in the headwaters of the Catawba River. The Catawba River Keeper is utilizing multiple initiatives including a “Trash Trout”, and live staking to improve the quality of McDowell County water.

Great Trails State Coalition/Year of the Trail

McDowell Trails Association (MTA) President Steve Pierce discussed the Year of the Trail that will be celebrated in 2023.

Cathy Moore and Steve Hunter were also present.

Mr. Pierce asked the Board to be a part of the Great Trails State Coalition.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to join the Great Trails State Coalition, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Building Projects

Services Building

Staff has executed the contract with CBSA architects for the design services for the services building. The architect’s team has spent several days going through the building and updating architectural drawings. He will be meeting with County staff and other current and future occupants of the building soon to develop the program and how the space is to be utilized.

Old EMS Station

Staff has worked over the last few weeks to prepare the building for removal. The lead paint and asbestos contractor has been through the building and has begun to identify potential contaminants. Several potential asbestos spots have been identified that will need to be abated by a specialist before the building can be removed.

Paving

The Garden Street lot is scheduled for paving, which should be done within the next couple of weeks. The other parking lots that were identified for paving will be addressed in the spring once the asphalt plants have reopened.

DSS Building

The Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Architectural Services is out for responses with a deadline of November 18th. The firm will help generate a capital improvement plan for the DSS building needs. The recommendation will occur at the December 5th Board meeting.

Verizon Cell Tower Easement

At the October 17th Board meeting, the Board of Commissioners voted to accept no less than \$25,000 from Verizon in exchange for an easement on County-owned property off of NC 226 South. The company has agreed to the offer and has sent staff easement documents for

execution. There will be \$1,000 paid to the County over the course of 25 years for a total amount of \$25,000.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the easement with the wording of “perpetual” to be taken out of the easement agreement, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Water and Emergency Services Ordinance Updates

There was previously a first reading of the Hazardous Materials, State of Emergency, and Water System Ordinances.

The Hazardous Materials and State of Emergency ordinances were updates of old ordinances that needed to be updated to match modern requirements. No new restrictions or regulations are included in either. The Water System Ordinance is new and will codify practices that have been in place since the inception of the County’s water system.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the Hazardous Materials, State of Emergency, and Water System Ordinances, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Parks and Recreation Projects

Recreation Center

The project development of the Recreation Center’s scope of work continues. The architect has requested a meeting with the pool consultant who will help design that component of the project. The consultant has the plans and is working on the technical requirements of the pump system.

Grant Applications

The Maple Leaf playground grant was successfully submitted. Staff will be meeting later in the week to review possible projects for the PARTF applications that are due in May.

Water System Projects

Staff continues to work on an unprecedented number of water-related projects.

- The County’s engineer continues to work on the engineering and design for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Nebo Water System expansion. Phase 1 is very close to bidding. Phase 2, which involved extensions of lines westward towards the City’s system, is only at the beginning stages of design.
- Staff has received the official award for the Hoppy Tom Hollow Road Water Project. The first step for this project is the selection of an engineer. The selected firm is McGill Associates.
- An Appalachian Regional Commission grant to extend water around Exit 90 has been submitted and is pending a decision from State and Federal officials.
- The study of water service to the West Marion Elementary Area is underway. The ARC pre-application has been submitted.

- A grant for service along NC 126 was submitted by the September 30th deadline. The review process will probably take about two months.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the contract with McGill Associates for the Hoppy Tom Hollow Water Project, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Commissioner Ellis requested for staff to reach out to McDowell County Schools about partnering with the County in funding the water project.

ARPA Update

The County Manager gave an update on the latest American Rescue Plan Act expenditure report. Staff had no recommendations for any allocation changes. There is over \$46,000 in interest income available that has been accrued from the ARPA funding.

Incentive Agreement

The discussed incentive agreement is dated as of January 15, 2022 and is between FOS LLC, and Burch Holdings LLC (the "Company"), and the COUNTY OF MCDOWELL (the County).

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to accept the incentive agreement and adjust the dates as proposed, seconded by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 3-0, the motion passed.

School Board

Vice-Chairman Walker introduced the issue by stating that individuals have asked the Board why judges have to be affiliated with a party in order to run in their elections, but school board candidates do not. Vice-Chairman Walker opened the floor for discussion.

Commissioner Allison made a motion to request a local bill be passed to require McDowell County School Board candidates to run a partisan election, seconded by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Helipad Fee

Emergency Services Director, William Kehler, requested to implement a fee for EMS transfers that occur between the McDowell Hospital helipad and the hospital building. These transports have increased significantly over the last several years.

A base fee of \$400 and an additional fee of \$50 per 15 minutes after an hour delay was proposed to the board. Commissioner Ellis stated that the fee should include a \$400 base rate and an additional fee of \$100 per 15 minutes after an hour delay and should be billed to the hospital, not to the patient.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to institute a fee which includes a \$400 base rate and an additional fee of \$100 per 15 minutes after an hour delay, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Transit Policy Amendments/Special Event

Transit Director, Jason Hollifield, asked the Board to allow for Transit Policy amendments. The Transportation Advisory Board voted unanimously to request your approval.

Chuck Abernathy is coordinating another Christmas Tour of historic homes around Marion on Thursday, December 15th. He requested that McDowell Transit assist with the transport of the patrons. The proposal was discussed with Mr. Hollifield and he will be able to arrange the schedule so that there is no impact on operations on the day of the event.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the Transit Policy amendments and approve the special event times, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Administrative Items

- EMS write-offs totaling \$40,121.79.
- The Sugar Hill-Montford Cove Fire Department has applied for a building permit for their new station. They have requested a waiver of the inspection fee.
- Nebo Water System leak adjustment of \$26.18.
- Resolution for the sale of a firearm and badge for retiring Detective Andy Manis.
- The City sent over an interlocal agreement that covers what was discussed at the October 10th meeting (transfers property to the City, but County retains input regarding usage and monetary interest in the property).
- The following budget amendments:
 - GF 4 - Appropriates current year taxes due to the increase in discount allowed.
 - GF 5 – Appropriates a grant, donations, reimbursements, and designated fund balance in Emergency Services.
 - GF 6 – Transfers between line items due to increased insurance costs.
 - GF 7 – Appropriates designated fund balance for vehicle purchases.
 - GF 8 – Appropriates additional funding to Transit from NCDOT.
 - GF 9 – Appropriates program revenue in Parks and Recreation.
 - GF 10 – Appropriates program revenue and designated fund balance at DSS.
 - REV1 – Appropriates revaluation fund balance to pay out consultant contract.
 - ENT1 – Transfers between line items in the Waste Fund.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve administrative items, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Tax Matters

Commissioner Vaughn made a motion to approve the tax matters as presented, seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Board Appointments

Brooklyn Thompson has been recommended by Linda Burleson to serve one of the “Person under age 21” seats on the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council. This is the second reading for the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council which has one vacancy for the “Person under age 21.”

Commissioner Ellis made the motion appoint Brooklyn Thompson to the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed

This is the first reading for the Transportation Advisory Board. There are four seats that are expiring in next month.

This is the second reading for the Agricultural Advisory Board. Alvin Lytle and Tim Burke have applied to serve on the Board. There are more than two vacancies on the board.

Commissioner Ellis made the motion to appoint both Alvin Lytle and Tim Burke to serve on the Agriculture Advisory Board, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

This is the second reading for the Library Board of Trustees which has one vacancy. We will continue to seek applicants for the Library.

Citizen Comment

There were no citizen comments.

Commissioners/Staff Reports

The County Manager informed the Board of an invitation to the Marion Fire Department Christmas Banquet and he also made mention of Thanksgiving closures that are coming up on November 25th and 26th. He commends and thanks the departments who do not get to take off for holidays.

Commissioner Ellis expressed sincere gratitude and appreciation to McDowell County’s Emergency Service Departments.

Adjournment

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to adjourn at 6:27 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Attest:

Victoria Craig
Clerk to the Board

David N. Walker
Vice-Chairman