

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION – September 26, 2022**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, September 26, 2022, at 11:30 a.m., in the Commissioner’s Board Room, 69 N Main St., Marion, NC.

**Members Present**

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

**Members Absent**

None

**Others Present**

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

**Emergency Services Update**

Will Kehler, Emergency Services Director, and Adrienne Jones, Emergency Services Deputy Director, presented the McDowell County Emergency Services Operational Update.

There is an increasing operational volume at 911 and McDowell EMS as well as hospital diversions and transport requests. COVID call volume continues to be monitored. Overdose and Narcan trends are on the rise and continue to be a concern. There has been a 43% increase in Narcan Administration. 177 total overdoses are expected in 2022 which is on target for a 20% increase by the end of 2022.

The 911 Manager has concerns related to staffing levels on the night shift and during peak hours. Currently, there are 3 open positions. Since 2011 when consolidation occurred, Emergency Services has operated with only 3 dispatchers during the overnight shift.

There is a state and nationwide medication shortage that Emergency Services staff is having to be strategic with. There are also fleet issues due to the industry-wide delay in parts and vehicles.

**DSS Update**

Ashley Wooten, County Manager and Interim DSS Director, gave an MOU update that is discussed monthly. Currently, there are 8 vacancies in the child welfare department, most of which are primarily in investigations. Staffing is a statewide issue, and supervisors are working hard to recruit and retain.

## **Water Grant Application**

Lake Silver presented an update on the water grant application that staff is titling “The East End Water Project”. If this project proceeds to completion, it could provide up to 100 new connections. Staff is applying for \$2,836,740.

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

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to approve a \$100,000 match from the ARPA funding, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

## **CDBG Public Hearing/Grant Application Approval**

Chairman Brown declared the Board into a public hearing at 12:18 p.m. pursuant to general statute 143-318.10.

Ashley Wooten, County Manager, noted that the public hearing had been properly advertised in *The McDowell News*. He added that the NC Department of Commerce has announced funding availability for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Neighborhood Revitalization category. This funding can be spent on numerous public projects, but the primary focus is on housing.

McDowell County intends to submit an application in the amount of \$950,000 for the purposes of providing housing rehabilitation and emergency housing repairs for low-and-moderate income (LMI) households throughout the county. A total of \$855,000 would be spent on housing rehabilitation and emergency repair activities with no more than \$95,000 being expended on the administration of the grant. One hundred percent (100%) of the CDBG funds will be used to benefit low-and-moderate (LMI) persons.

Mr. Wooten informed the Board that after they authorized County staff to work on the CDBG application at the September 12<sup>th</sup> meeting, staff has worked closely with the Gateway Wellness Foundation which is under the leadership of Neil Gurney.

Neil Gurney led a discussion with the Board regarding the Foundation’s efforts and findings for housing rehabilitation needs throughout McDowell County. Mr. Gurney stated that a high number of people own their homes in the County. Because McDowell County was a mill town a number of years ago, many of those houses are what the citizens own today. With the increased age of these homes, there is a lot of need for repairs. Mr. Gurney told the Board that prior to Gateway Wellness Foundation coming to McDowell in the summer of 2021, the County had no housing repair program. The churches in the community stepped up as much as they could to help alleviate these needs.

Since Mr. Wooten reached out to Mr. Gurney after the September 12<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, the Foundation has put together around 100 applications for home repair that will be needed in the coming weeks. He noted that the County and Gateway have 43 applications in the grant application with the others being alternates.

Commissioner Ellis asked Mr. Gurney the number of churches that were involved in assisting with home repair needs throughout McDowell County. Mr. Gurney said that there were 18 churches in total, but 5 of them are more prominent in the aid.

Carl Becker said, "Please go ahead with this grant because it is very needed."

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to go out of the Public Hearing at 12:30 p.m., second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve as presented including the Resolution and the Citizen Participation Plan, second by Vice-Chairman Walker. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

**Closed Session**

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to go into Closed Session at 12:31 p.m. pursuant to N.C. G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (3) and (6); second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to go out of Closed Session at 12:41 p.m., second by Vice-Chairman Walker. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

No action was taken.

**Adjournment**

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to adjourn at 12:44 p.m., second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Attest:

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Victoria Craig  
Clerk to the Board

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Tony G. Brown  
Chairman