

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION – February 20, 2023**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, February 20, 2023, at 11:31 a.m., in the Commissioner’s Board Room, 69 N Main St., Marion, NC.

**Members Present**

Tony G. Brown, Chairman; David N. Walker, Vice-Chairman; Chris Allison; Patrick Ellis; Lynn Greene

**Members Absent**

None

**Others Present**

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

**Call to Order**

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

**DSS Update/Vendor Presentation**

Chris Mease from Northwoods presented a proposal to the Board. He promoted a program called “Traverse” that will digitize paper case files for remote access. Mrs. Sigmon, DSS Director, informed the Board that the proposed program is what she used in Burke County and found it beneficial.

The discounted quote that was given to the Board was a 3-year contract with Traverse totaling \$593,000. The state has a reimbursement rate of approximately 50% for each year, leaving the County to pay the other half, which would be an approximate 3-year total of \$296,500.

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the Traverse system and its cost as presented by Mr. Mease, seconded by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Mrs. Sigmon is trying to make the DSS building safer while waiting on the new building to be built.

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to have staff look into a master lock key system at the current DSS building, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

## **DSS Building Discussion**

Staff has met with both NCDHHS and USDA to discuss funding options for a new DSS building. There were some points to consider:

Financing:

- There are options on financing the construction. If the County chooses USDA funding, the benefits is that the term can typically be as long as 30 years and the interest rate will possibly be lower. Also, there is a small possibility that they would provide some amount of grant to cover some of the building cost.
- Bank financing is an option, but the loan term would likely max out at 20 years. The interest rate would probably be a bit higher as well.

Between the two options, USDA would provide a lower annual payment, but the bank financing would have the County paying less interest over time.

Cost-Sharing:

- The County is responsible for financing the entire cost of the building. However, the federal government will pay back over the life of the building (typically 40 years) a portion of the building's depreciation. For example, if the cost of the building is \$15 million, the County could expect to receive an annual payment of approximately \$485,000, which is about half of that.

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the resolution and contract adjustments with the additional PAR form to be completed as recommended by staff, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

## **Opioid Settlement Discussion**

Mr. Wooten reviewed several items related to the opioid lawsuit settlement. He noted that the Commissioners had previously agreed to allow the McDowell Partnership for Substance Awareness (formerly the Substance Use Task Force) to review allocation proposals and make recommendations on how best to target the funds provided to McDowell County.

Funding will be provided to McDowell County EMS (\$50,000), CareReach (\$50,000), Freedom Life (\$45,000), RHA (\$49,302), Black Mountain Counseling – Old Fort Clinic (\$50,000), McLeod Center (\$50,000), Marion Police Department (\$50,000), McDowell Mission Alliance (\$27,849), and CULA (\$27,849). County staff will work over the next few weeks to create funding agreements for each organization to sign.

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the funding as presented, seconded by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

## **Property Sale Discussion**

Approximately 20 years ago, the County received a donation of property that fronts Crescent Avenue and Fern Avenue in Marion. The donation was made as part of the fundraising

for the Senior Center project. The portion on the property on Crescent Avenue is very steep. The Fern Avenue side is likely more suitable for construction, but would still need site work. An offer of \$8,000 has been made for the property.

After discussion, Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to reject the \$8,000 offer, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Chairman Brown wants to see what other offers the County receives. Commissioner Ellis stated he would like there to be a sign on the property advertising the sale.

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to place a sign in the yard advertising the sale of the property, seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

### **2023 Legislative Proposal**

Mr. Wooten presented the Board with the list of 2023 Legislative Proposals in the order they decided upon at the previous Board meeting.

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|--|---------------|
| 1. New Department of Social Services Building                    | \$15 million  |
| 2. West Marion Elementary Water Service                          | \$4 million   |
| 3. Transfer Station Complex Improvements                         | \$7 million   |
| 4. Recreation Center Improvements Phase 2                        | \$5 million   |
| 5. Watershed Dam Rehabilitation and Modernization                | \$16 million  |
| 6. Universal Property Resiliency Projects (stream and lake work) | \$12 million  |
| 7. Standalone 911 Center   | \$4.5 million |
| 8. Marion Fire Department Equipment                              | \$350,000     |

Commissioner Ellis stated that he would like to see the County transition from a 3-year budget to a 5-year budget.

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the list as presented, seconded by Commissioner Allison. Commissioner Ellis clarified that staff will be seeking funding aid at the state and federal levels. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

### **Insurance Updates**

Mr. Wooten informed the Board of a conversation he and the Finance Director had with brokers regarding self-insurance. Vice-Chairman Walker stated that he would like a workshop with the insurance company.

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Walker made a motion to adjourn at 12:38 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Allison. 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