

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
RECESSED SESSION – OCTOBER 23, 2023**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in a Recessed Session on Monday, October 23, 2023, at 5:00 p.m., in the Commissioners Board Room, 69 N Main Street, Marion, NC 28752.

**Members Present**

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

**Members Absent**

N/A

**Others Present**

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Charity Turner-Coates, Clerk to the Board; Chad Marsh Director of Parks and Recreation; Alison Bell, Director of Finance; Dewayne Riddle, Public Services Director; Patrick McMurry, Architect.

**Call to Order**

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**Capital Planning Discussion**

**A. Recreational Center**

County Manager Wooten opened up the meeting by reviewing the planning and financial process that has been in place for some time in reference to the Recreational Center. Mr. Wooten explained around June of 2023 the County received bids for the Recreation Center that included grading, a drainage system, parking, ball fields, a new swimming pool, and various other improvements. The lowest bid was approximately 6 million dollars. The funds available for the project are approximately 4 million dollars. For this reason, the architect was asked to remove certain components from the bids and adjust in an attempt to stay within the 4 million-dollar budget the County has to work with.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to reject the bids that were open on June 1, 2023. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

Chairman Brown recognized Mr. Chad Marsh, Director of Parks and Recreation for the County, and Mr. Patrick McMurry, the Architect with Holland and Hamrick Architects. They shared with the Board, that the cost of the swimming pool, parking improvements, drainage, and other improvements would cost approximately 3 million dollars, which is within the County's 4 million-dollar budget. The ballfield alone would cost approximately 5 to 6 million dollars.

Commissioner Ellis communicated he felt the ballfields would benefit more people in the County, specifically Old Fort, Glenwood, and Nebo communities.

Vice Chairman Walker articulated his desire for the community to have the ballfield as well, and all of the positives that come with it but with the information and budget constraints he would like to focus on the original concern of the safety of children due to the traffic flow at the recreational center. The current recreation center has one way in and out, which creates issues with traffic flow and congestion. He would like to see this be the number one priority. He would like for the Board to move in the direction of the swimming pool, traffic flow, and parking and have appropriate drainage established. If any funds remain, use them toward the ball field area improvements.

Commissioner Lynn Greene and Commissioner Allison agreed with Vice Chairman Walker, with Commissioner Greene stating some people in the County would like to have a place to swim.

Chairman Brown stated he would not be in favor of borrowing any money and would be willing to let the project sit another year if needed.

A motion was made by Chairman Brown to sit on the project for one year and was seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 2 to 3, the motion failed.

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Walker to proceed with the bidding of the swimming pool, drainage, and parking/traffic flow and was seconded by Commissioner Greene.

Discussion followed before the vote.

The motion was amended by Vice Chairman Walker to include an alternate in the bid to include the outside restrooms at the back end of the ball field and was seconded by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 3 to 5, the motion passed.

## **B. Department of Social Services Building**

County Manager Wooten updated the Board on the Department of Social Services building, explaining there is no State funding available to help with a new DSS building and suggested to the Board to request State Appropriation funding, as the DSS building is mandated by the State for the County to have. In the spring of 2023, two bids were received by the County that included the cost of a new DSS building. The first one was 13 million dollars which included office space, with no room for growth. The second was upward of 23 million dollars which would allow for growth plus a boardroom and a training room. Mr. Wooten advised the Board

the short session for the State will be in May of 2024 and suggested to the Board to start conversations with the appropriate people in Raleigh.

Discussion followed. Vice Chairman Walker stated Medicaid is expanding which will increase the number of employees in the building.

Chairman Brown stated he would not support going into debt for anything at this time.

The Board will be inviting NC State Senator Daniel, Representative Greene, and Representative Johnson to McDowell County to tour the current Department of Social Services Building.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to request from the State of North Carolina Appropriations the amount of \$25 million dollars for a new Department of Social Services Building and was seconded by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

### **C. Transfer Station**

Commissioner Ellis requested updates on the cost of replacing a truck and the items needing to be repaired, replaced, or purchased to fix the transfer station, which is also mandated by the State. He requested the information be presented at the November or December Board meeting so the Board can make the appropriate motions to request additional funding from the State. Currently, the County has approximately \$500,000 available for this project.

### **D. Animal Shelter**

County Manager Wooten updated the Board on the animal shelter. The sketches for a new building are complete. Discussion followed about funding options that are available to help with the cost of a new animal shelter, including private donations and moving other County funds. There are currently \$719,022 in a capital reserve in the American Rescue Plan budget, \$350,000 that is designated for the Service Building upgrades, \$275,000 available from the sale of the Pilot Plant facility, \$100,000 from one donor, and \$250,000 from another private donor.

The Board and County Manager discussed the need for office space for adult probation and the possibility of using the second floor of the services building. This would require Child Support, GAL, and Project Challenge to move. The County currently has available office space on the lower level of the Senior Center, the building currently being rented by RHA, and in the Health Department on Spalding Road. All of the spaces listed could bring in revenue for the County.

There was a Consensus by the Board for the County Manager to speak with all of the different parties involved and see if the lower level of the Senior Center would be conducive for RHA and if the building currently being used by RHA would be conducive for Adult Probation/Parole. The Consensus also includes speaking with the private donors for the animal shelter. The private donors need to be informed the County will need a formal commitment from them for the donation toward the animal shelter. County Manager Wooten will update the Board at a future Board meeting.

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Walker to proceed with putting \$1.5 million dollars toward the building of a new animal shelter and the motion was seconded by Chairman Brown. After speaking with the County's Director of Finance, Allison Bell, the second was retracted by Chairman Brown and Vice Chairman Walker amended his motion to remove \$350,000 dollars from the motion. These were funds allocated for improvements to the County Service Building upgrades and there was some concern the money could not be reallocated for another project.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to proceed with using \$1.325 million dollars toward the building of a new animal shelter and having a fundraiser/donor day. The motion was seconded by Chairman Allison. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

**McDowell Tech Request**

County Manager Wooten shared with the Board, that the interim President for McDowell Technical College presented him and Ms. Bell with a document that calculated the annual operational cost of \$500,000 per year for the new improvements being made at the college. This includes two maintenance positions, contracted cleaning, and utilities. The number is based on square footage. The document will need to be signed by County Manager Wooten and Ms. Bell, indicating the Board has been informed of the approximate cost.

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Walker to acknowledge the document and the Board had been advised. The motion also included that the County Manager will respond in written form to the College, stating the Commissioners understand the operational costs of the facility and there will be future conversations about that cost, with the hope that the cost will be much lower than what was submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

**Adjourned**

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to adjourn at 6:25 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

Attest:

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Charity Turner-Coates  
Clerk to the Board

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Tony G. Brown  
Chairman

