

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – January 22, 2024**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Tuesday, January 22, 2024, at 11:30 a.m., in the Commissioner's Board Room, 69 N Main St., Marion, NC.

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Patrick Ellis

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Sena Allison, Clerk to the Board; Alison Bell, Finance Director; Bobbie Sigmon, DSS Director; Dustin Burlison, Vaya Health; Serina Hinson, Lowdermilk Church

Call to Order

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

Appointment and Swearing in of Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners

The County Manager noted that Ms. Sena Allison would need to formally be appointed to the position of Clerk to the Board.

Commissioner xxx motioned to appoint Ms. Allison as Clerk to the Board, second by Commissioner xxx. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Chairman Walker administered the oath of office to Ms. Allison.

Fiscal Year 2023 Audit Presentation

Serina Hinson from Lowdermilk Church presented the FY 2023 Audit Report. She noted that the firm was issuing an unmodified opinion, which means there were no findings. The available fund balance increased to 32.47%.

Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the audit and approve the contract amendment to reflect a new date, seconded by Commissioner Greene. Vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Vaya Health Update

Dustin Burleson from Vaya gave updates to the board which included: the 2023-2025 General Assembly Budget directed NCDHHS to reduce LME/MCO's to no more than five and no less than four. Mr. Burleson told of Secretary Kody Kinsley directing, dissolving, reappointing and reassigning MCOs to various counties.

Mr. Burleson stated that the Tailored Plan "go live" was scheduled no later than July 1, 2024. Medicaid expansion had its "go live" date in December of 2023.

Mr. Burleson referred to a state expansion of McDowell Co. Healthy Program which started in February of 2023, focusing on housing instability, food insecurity, lack of transportation, and interpersonal violence.

A discussion on ways they are working to improve and prevent the lack of Foster Care families and programs with a Foster Care Prevention launch, a Health Plan 101 being introduced, and Flyers being sent out.

A general discussion followed for behavioral health budget item provisions.

DSS Update

DSS Director Bobbie Simon reviewed Child Protective Services assessment data, noting the unit is making strides at 91.8%, which is a low rate. Foster Care is meeting goals on home visits, with 41% being discharged within twelve months. No more re-entry to Foster Care at 8.3%. She stated the number of children without placement is reported to the State on a regular basis.

A general discussion was held on a child in the Foster Care service currently.

Ms. Sigmon gave an update on the number of foster children at 99, as of December 31, 2023. The number of licensed foster parents is currently at 42. In an effort to promote more people to become foster parents, the staff members are wearing tee shirts and they are putting up yard signs.

Vice Chair Brown asked how many children were adopted last year and Ms. Sigmon said fifteen.

Commissioner Greene asked about the opening of Meg's Place, and Ms. Sigmon answered they are waiting on the State to put out the determination and guidance of staffing.

Ms. Sigmon reported on a family that couldn't get on the list for CAP services, which has been an ongoing issue. Commissioner Allison asked for Mr. Wooten to draft a letter to legislators regarding this.

A general discussion was held on vendors supplying heating assistance such as wood or heating oil to families. Chairman Walker asked Ms. Sigmon to look into who administers the vendors and if all can be done locally.

A discussion of food nutrition applications is increasing across the board. Ms. Sigmon spoke with the Food and Nutrition Supervisor and they are getting a 65- 70% approval on these.

Ms. Sigmon ended her update with a review of Medicaid expansion numbers. She stated that the State will be doing a statewide media campaign for the expansion of Medicaid.

Administrative Items

Ashley Wooten, County Manager noted there were several administrative items. He noted there was a contract for engineering services from TGS Engineers for the Nebo Interchange Water Project. He also stated there was a contract for the engineering for the Universal Phase 2 grading project.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to approve the engineering contracts with a second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

The County Manager noted there were a few tax matters being relayed from the Tax Assessor. The first item involved an appeal by Conterra regarding the value of the fiber that is installed in the ground throughout the county. The company stated that some of the fiber was dark, meaning it is not used, and therefore it had little or no value according to the company. Mr. Wooten noted that the Tax Assessor's recommendation was to reject the appeal.

The second item was a tax release for Baxter Healthcare. Mr. Wooten noted that the company had made a mistake when listing their business personal property with the County. The value of the release is \$1,077,654.69 with \$888,908.49 being the County portion with the balance belonging to the various district taxes.

The final tax item was an appeal by Old Fort Church of God to request an untimely appeal for a property tax exemption for a property they purchased for a parsonage.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to approve the requests on the tax matters with a second by Vice Chairman Brown. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

The last administrative item Mr. Wooten presented was a revised Resolution for a Division of Water Resources grant for an application that was previously approved the Commissioners. The revision allows the County to seek the maximum grant amount of \$200,000.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SUBMISSION OF THE FONTA FLORA STATE TRAIL-CURTIS CREEK BRIDGE DWR GRANT

WHEREAS, the McDowell County Board of Commissioners desires to sponsor, engineering, permitting, and construction of a footbridge and associated greenway across Curtis Creek near Old Fort;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) The Board requests the State of North Carolina to provide financial assistance to McDowell County for Fonta Flora State Trail — Curtis Creek Bridge in the amount of \$200,000 or 50 percent of nonfederal project costs, whichever is the lesser amount;

- 2) The Board assumes full obligation for payment of the balance of project costs;
- 3) The Board will obtain all necessary State and Federal permits;
- 4) The Board will comply with all applicable laws governing the award of contracts and the expenditure of public funds by local governments.
- 5) The Board will supervise construction of the project to assure compliance with permit conditions and to assure safe and proper construction according to approved plans and specifications;
- 6) The Board will obtain suitable spoil disposal areas as needed and all other easements or rights-of-way that may be necessary for the construction and operation of the project without cost or obligation to the State;
- 7) The Board will assure that the project is open for use by the public on an equal basis with no restrictions;
- 8) The Board will hold the State harmless from any damages that may result from the construction, operation and maintenance of the project;
- 9) The Board accepts responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the completed project.

Adopted by the Board of Commissioners this 22nd day of January, 2024.

Commissioner Greene motioned to approve the revised resolution second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Meeting Adjourned

Vice Chairman Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 12:32 pm.