

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – September 15, 2025**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, September 15, 2025, in the Commissioners' Board Room, 69 N. Main Street, Marion, NC.

Members Present

Chairman, Tony Brown; Vice-Chair, Lynn Greene; Patrick Ellis, Trisha Garner, and David Walker

Members Absent

None

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Madalyn Robinson, Clerk to the Board; Fred Coats, County Attorney; Dr. Tracy Grit, Superintendent of McDowell County Schools; Chad Marsh, Assistant Superintendent; Terry Frank, Chairman of McDowell County School Board; Suzanne Rampey, Chief Finance Officer; John Henning, School Board Attorney

New Elementary School Interlocal Agreement

Dr. Tracy Grit gave an overview of the interlocal agreement and stated his appreciation for the partnership between McDowell County's Commissioners and its school systems. Dr. Grit turned it over to Mr. John Henning to give an overview of the draft interlocal agreement and recognized Chairman Terry Frank of the McDowell County School Board, Assistant Superintendent Marsh, and Ms. Rampey. Mr. Henning explained that the document presented is the draft school construction agreement and how this will be used to apply for the Needs-Based School Construction Grant. The County and the school board will be working together on the interlocal agreement for the application to construct the new elementary school. Mr. Henning explained that if you're holding the property for collateral, school systems are not legally able to take out a capital mortgage loan. The County would need to take out a capital mortgage loan for this property, and this is why a partnership between the County and the School System is important. The School Board is also legally unable to apply for a sales tax refund for the construction of the new school. The School Board is holding the title to this property, and included in the interlocal agreement is a lease of the property to the County for the of purchasing local and state sales tax reimbursements. Partnering up for the application is crucial for keeping money in the County. Added into the lease is the opportunity to transfer/lease back to the school system after construction.

Chairman Brown expressed his appreciation for the strong partnership between the County and the School system and explained that they will do whatever they can to work

together for the construction of the new school. Commissioner Ellis asked if they have a price nailed down for the school, and Dr. Grit said they should know the numbers in the next week, but around 50 million is the price they're currently looking at. The full 42 million dollars is being requested for the grant, with a 5% matching because of the County's tier one designation. Commissioner Ellis asked if the lottery money stopped when receiving the grant, and Dr. Grit said it did not, and it has changed since the last rebuild (Old Fort Elementary). Commissioner Walker asked for the deadline to submit state projects and the reward date. October 3rd is the submittal date, and there has been discussion about the project moving to the treasurer's office. The award date is undecided at this time. Roughly 120 applications have been submitted, but Dr. Grit is expecting McDowell's application to be near the top because the County's needs meet every requirement of the application. Commissioner Walker asked if there were any competing Counties in the west applying for this, and Dr. Grit said Cherokee County.

Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the school construction agreement as presented, provide letters of support where they are needed, and allow the County to have the first right of refusal on the vacated elementary school building. This motion is seconded by Vice-chair Greene. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Department of Social Services Operations Update

Mr. Wooten gave an overview of DSS operations and presented the monthly MOU data. Mr. Wooten stated that the person responsible for Child Support Data was out and will provide the data when they return. Mr. Wooten explained that the vacancy report is provided every month, and vacancies are being filled. Mr. Wooten gave credit to Ms. Lee (Human Resources) and Ms. Reid (DSS Program Administrator) for recruiting people for DSS vacancies. Mr. Wooten stated that there is a seven-week training requirement, and many new hires are still in the preservice training and are unable to work cases on their own at this time. Progress is still being made. Mr. Wooten referred to PathNC and stated that there is a learning curve for all the staff; however, it is going well. Mr. Wooten stated he was proud of the effort made by the staff to familiarize themselves with this program and relayed that there is a lot of effort in training right now. Ms. Reid is working to ensure employees are getting the training needed. Mr. Wooten expressed his appreciation for Ms. Reid and her hard work.

Economic Services is rolling steady with no big changes. Adult Services are working on licensing an adult day health program through HCA Care Partners (similar to PACE for the elderly). Staff have been working with them on the development of this program. Child Support is moving on steadily. The E-Courts program is being learned. Statewide, the court system is implementing an online court system. This will all be electronic, and training is in progress.

Consolidated Human Service Agency Public Hearing, Resolution, & Director Posting

Mr. Wooten gave background on previous discussions about consolidated Human Service Agencies. Discussion began three months ago about a consolidated Human Service Agency. In 2012, Counties were given the option to change how they govern Human Service Agencies, and at that time, the County Commissioners took on the governing role. Within the last three months, it has been studied what should be included in the consolidated Human Service Agency (DSS, Transit, Senior Center, Veterans, and Health). Last month, it was decided not to include health in the consolidated agency. Before consolidating those functions under one umbrella, a public hearing is required. After the public hearing, the board can choose what they'd like to consolidate.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to move into the public hearing, seconded by Vice-chair Greene. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

There were no comments during the public hearing. Commissioner Ellis made a motion to go out of public hearing, seconded by Commissioner Greene. By a motion of 5-0, the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten presented the resolution authorizing the creation of the human services agency for consideration.

**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE MCDOWELL COUNTY
CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY**

WHEREAS, N.C.G.S. 153A-77 authorizes counties to consolidate departments into a Consolidated Human Services Agency to promote efficiency and effectiveness and to appoint a Consolidated Human Services Board with authority to exercise the powers conferred by law; and

WHEREAS, after analyzing and evaluating the provision of services to residents by existing human services agencies, the McDowell County Board of Commissioners concluded that it is in the best interest of the County to consolidate human services agencies to more effectively and economically deliver services and resources; and

WHEREAS, the McDowell County Board of Commissioners has determined that it is in the best interest of the County for the Board of Commissioners to serve as the Consolidated Human Services Board; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was duly advertised and conducted on September 15, 2025;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the McDowell County Board of Commissioners that:

1. There is hereby created a McDowell County Consolidated Human Services Agency ("CHSA") having the authority to carry out the functions of the McDowell County Departments of Social Services, McDowell Transit, McDowell Senior Center, Veterans Services.
2. The McDowell County Board of Commissioners shall serve as the policy-making, rule-making, and administrative board of the CHSA and which shall have the powers conferred by N.C.G.S. 153A-77.
3. Employees who serve as staff of the CHSA are subject to the provisions of the McDowell County personnel policies and ordinances.
4. This Resolution shall be effective September 15, 2025.

Adopted this 15th day of September, 2025.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to accept the resolution to include the personnel policies that need to be amended in order to create the consolidated Human Service Agency. This motion is seconded by Commissioner Garner. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten stated that he has the job posting the Human Services Director for approval, sign-off, and posting. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed by consensus.

Administrative Items

Mr. Wooten presented administrative items to the board for approval and began with items related to the Water System.

- Capital Project Ordinance Amendment One: For the Providence Water System project. Related to this is an engineering agreement amendment related to the work that is necessary for the grant and the project design.
- The resolution authorizing the submission of a grant to serve the loop on Marler Road and Zion Hill.

Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the Capital Project Ordinance Amendment One, the engineering agreement, and the resolution supporting the grant application submission. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed

Mr. Wooten presented the finance and budget items.

- Financing: There is a financing resolution for Sheriff's Office vehicles, one-wheel loader for the transfer station, a truck for Emergency Management, an SUV for EMS, and radios for the Sheriff's Office.
- Budget amendments: GF-9 and ENT-1 will be used to allocate the financing proceeds.

Vice-chair Greene made a motion to approve the financing resolution for various vehicles, along with the two budget amendments presented. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten moved on to the Health Department Lease.

- Health Department Lease - A draft lease agreement has been prepared between the County and the Health District. The lease will need to be sent to the Board of Health for their review and approval.

The building was built and occupied by the health department in its entirety. The impression given to staff was to create a lease and rent to the health department for free of charge. This gives the commissioners full authority to approve or deny leases in the building. Chairman Brown stated that they needed to lease the property for a fair and marketable price, not discounted. Commissioner Walker stated that the Transit Department needs space, and the offices at the Health Department will suit the Transit Department's needs. Commissioner Walker stated that the location would be more suitable in the County building and suggested that they

give the current renters ample time to move out and move County functions into that building. Commissioner Ellis stated that he likes the current lease agreement as presented.

Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the lease as presented, with the addition of moving the transit department into the building and notifying current renters of this change. This motion is seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Commissioner Walker made a motion that Mr. Wooten contact the hospital CEO and try to lease the empty space on the side lower level of the Senior Center. This motion is seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Closed Session [NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(6)]

Vice-chair Greene made a motion to go into closed session at 12:10 pm, seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed. Vice-Chair Greene made a motion to come out of closed session at 1:16 pm, seconded by Commissioner Walker. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Adjournment

Commissioner Walker made a motion to adjourn at 1:17 pm, with a second by Commissioner Garner. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Attest:

Madalyn Robinson
Clerk to the Board

Tony Brown
Chairman