

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL SESSION – September 29, 2025**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Special session on Monday, September 29, 2025, in the Commissioners' Board Room, 69 N. Main Street, Marion, NC.

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Patrick Ellis

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Madalyn Robinson, Clerk to the Board; Fred Coats, County Attorney; Will Kehler, Emergency Services Director

911 Staffing Concerns

Will Kehler thanked Amber Buff for her leadership at the 911 Communications Center. Numerous centers in North Carolina are struggling with staffing matters. One of the issues that has been present is the low entry-level salaries at the 911 communication center. The center is in a serious staffing crisis that can no longer function properly due to this. Of the nineteen positions, three are on medical leave. The communications center has four open positions, two trainees who have not been released to function yet as full communicators, and one pending full-time resignation. They are currently looking at ten positions they are trying to backfill. Current full-time staff are working excessive overtime, and this creates concern for staff burnout and errors. 911 Communications cannot lose any more of its experienced staff. It takes 9-12 weeks for new employees to be trained on all of the agency's protocols (through Catawba Valley Community College). The communications center is spending approximately 22k per new employee for training. Mr. Kehler and Mrs. Buff have done everything they can do internally to fix staffing concerns. When the pay study was done in FY23, the County was ranked third, however, in 2025, the County is third from the bottom in terms of pay. The overall proposed adjustment will go to the senior staff and increase entry-level pay. Mr. Kehler presented the proposed pay adjustment for 911 Communications workers. Mr. Kehler suggested using an education policy and implementing the reimbursement policy for new hires, where they will need to pay back the cost for education if they leave within 12 months of being hired (similar to what the Sheriff's Office does).

Commissioner Walker asked if this was a common practice, and Mr. Kehler stated that it was common with EMS organizations. Mr. Wooten stated that funds for this have been identified through EMS Collections.

Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the request as presented to help retain workers and attract new workers now that funding has been identified. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Greene. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Closed Session [NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(4)]

Commissioner Walker made a motion to go into closed session at 11:47 am, seconded by Commissioner Garner. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed

Vice-chair Greene made a motion to come out of closed session at 12:26 pm, seconded by Commissioner Garner. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Incentive Agreement

Commissioner Walker made a motion to cancel the incentive agreement with Forza Boat Company, subject to the sale of the Forza property to a manufacturing company. This was seconded by Vice-chair Greene. By a motion of 4-0, the motion passed.

Adjournment

Commissioner Greene made a motion to adjourn at 12:27 pm, with a second by Commissioner Walker. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Attest:

Madalyn Robinson
Clerk to the Board

Tony Brown
Chairman